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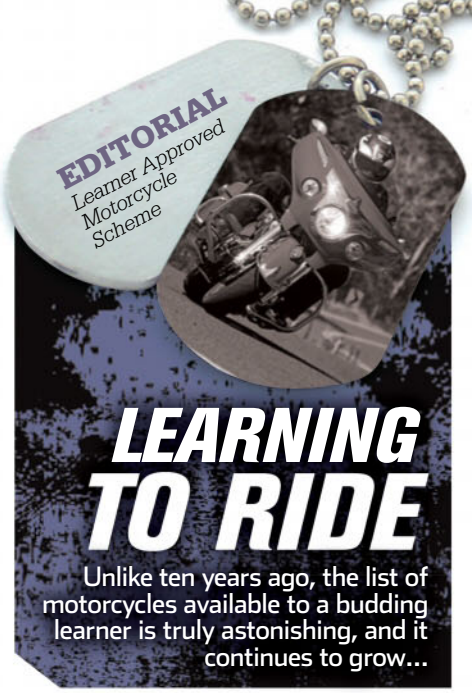


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LEARNING TO RIDE

Unlike ten years ago, the list of motorcycles available to a budding learner is truly astonishing, and it continues to grow...

Compared to learner riders today, most of us had a small amount of bikes to choose from when first acquiring our license. Motorcycles like the Honda CBR 250, Yamaha Virago 250, Suzuki GT 250 or the Kawasaki GPX 250. Notice the pattern…they were all restricted to 250cc or less. This of course changed when the Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme (LAMS) was introduced back on the 1st July 2008, which effectively allowed learner license holders to ride motorcycles deemed to meet the LAMS requirements. (A LAMS approved motorcycle must have a maximum power-to-weight ratio of 150 kilowatts per tonne (KW/t) and an engine that does not exceed 660cc).

In a heartbeat motorcycles were being produced for the new category by some very reputable companies, including Kawasaki, Honda, Yamaha and Suzuki. And probably the most popular learner motorcycle in recent years would have to be the Kawasaki Ninja 300, although I think it's fair to Kawasaki they haven't got a monopoly on the market. In what has turned into a very lucrative industry, most motorcycle manufacturers are now producing numerous different models that fit into the LAMS category.

It's also the abundance of styles available that seems to be growing too, from sportsbikes like the already mentioned Kawasaki Ninja 300, the Honda CBR 300R or the recently released Yamaha R3, to naked models like KTM's 390 Duke, mini-cruisers like the Kawasaki Vulcan S and even adventure bikes such as the Suzuki V-Strom 650. Obviously the list goes on and I've merely scratched the surface, but there's basically a motorcycle available to suit any learner's taste. There's also the scooter craze that seems to be growing in popularity, and with most models being LAMS approved, it plays a major hand in attracting an entire new trend of riders, especially city dwellers due to the economical and mobility advantages offered by scooters.


Suzuki V-Strom 650


Honda CBR300R

The LAMS really has revolutionised motorcycling. Could you imagine riding something like a Ducati or a Harley-Davidson when you first got your license? Well now you can from entry level with the 659 Monster and the Street 500 respectively, which brings me to another point. By offering a motorcycle for entry level riders, it increases your chance of keeping them with your brand from the very start until the time comes to upgrade, something Harley-Davidson made no secrets about this very fact being their driving force behind their 500cc campaign. In essence the Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme is a great idea, and continues to attract new riders to the fray, and along with it, hopefully more experience riding larger bikes.

Talking about larger bikes, not every motorcycle being released lately is aimed at learners, like the new H2 and H2R Ninjas adorning this month's cover. Unfortunately it looks like we might not even get the opportunity to test the H2 here in Australia as sales have already exceeded expectations, although we were lucky enough to get our European correspondent Roland Brown on the world launch. Of course there's still the chance we might get Magoo on the H2R the next time they have it at the track, but that's still in the pipeline. I was lucky enough to see it in the flesh at Kawasaki's headquarters a couple of months ago, and on learning that Murray Sayle was the first to ride it in the country, I just had to find out what he thought. All I got was a cheeky grin, which spoke a thousand words anyway. It was clear it was an experience he'd never forget, and yet another feather in his cap.

Also this issue we feature the Ducati Monster 1200 and 1200 'S', which now have some great touring accessories available, transforming the hot rod motorcycle into a bike you can do some serious miles on. And talking about cranking out the miles, if you prefer to ride in pure comfort, maybe the Harley-Davidson Street Glide Special is worth a look, especially if you don't mind listening to a few tunes. Steve Martin also enjoys a ride down to Phillip Island on Honda's new CBR 300R. From all reports it was a very fun bike to ride, even enjoyed by reigning World Superbike champion Sylvain Guintoli who jumped at the opportunity to take it for a couple of quick laps around the circuit. There's also a great feature for the Italian motorcycle fans from the Barber Motorcycle Museum in the US while the Cox Report takes a look at one of the best Moto GP racers of all time, Valentino Rossi.

And last but not least, it's great to be able to share the news that the magazine is not only now available digitally, it will also be returning to 100pages in a couple of issues. We've got some enticing features coming up too along with some exciting local bike launches, including the Yamaha R3 and the Aprilia Caponord Rally. So don't forget to keep sending in your suggestions to miles@twowheels.com.au or if you've got some photos of the last trip you took, send it in to Reader's Touring, 2 Stanley Street, Silverwater NSW 2128. In the meantime, ride safe and we hope to see you out there on two wheels somewhere… ■

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REVENGE OF THE NINJAS

Feature by Roland Brown



The latest incarnation of Kawasaki's H2 and H2R Ninja will simply blow your mind!

Nobody could claim they hadn't been warned about the Ninja H2 and H2R. There were all those trailer videos last year, followed by huge coverage when the supercharged fours were displayed at the shows, with talk of massive power outputs. Then Kawasaki had said that the original estimates were too low, and the street-legal H2 actually makes more than 200bhp with ram-air, far exceeded by the track-only H2R's unprecedented output of well over 300bhp.

But even after all that hype and expectation, it's still quite shocking to wind back the Ninja H2R's throttle out of the Losail circuit's final turn and onto the pit straight. There's a maniacal shriek as the bars go light in third gear, then the sound rises and falls rapidly as I tuck behind the screen, hold on tight and tap the quick-shifter three more times in quick succession. This incredible bike keeps on pulling hard deep into top before, with the first turn rapidly approaching, I have to sit up and squeeze the front brake lever and brace myself against the braking force and sudden rush of wind on my head and shoulders. It's a thrilling, violent experience from a production bike whose like has not been seen before.

Back in the pits, a mechanic presses a button on the dashboard to reveal that the H2R recorded a maximum of 319km/h. A couple of braver or smaller journos went even faster, over 200mph or 322km/h. (With taller gearing, Kawasaki's test rider has clocked over 357km/h on a Japanese speed-bowl.) And the standard Ninja H2 had been seriously rapid on the straight in the previous session, revving high in top gear to get close to its electronically limited maximum of 300km/h.









If you're looking for speed and excitement, you've come to the right place with the Ninjas. Kawasaki has long prided itself as a brand that delivers high performance, dating right back to the original H2 two-stroke triple of 1972. And it's absolutely no coincidence that the firm revived the H2 name for this pair of supercharged bikes that are the most outrageous and hardest-accelerating yet from a major manufacturer.

That first H2, also known as the Mach IV, earned a reputation as the world's quickest streetbike, and also as a wild machine that spat off plenty of riders. It was the basis of the even more fearsome H2R factory triple that won races ridden by stars including Paul Smart and Yvon DuHamel, but earned the nickname 'Green Meanie' with some vicious behaviour at speed.

That was the spirit that forged Kawasaki's reputation, and which the firm wanted to recreate with the modern Ninja H2 and H2R. They certainly made a good start with the styling, which is stunning – combining an array of dramatic, distinctive shapes with a quality of finish rarely seen on a production bike. The H2R is unique in that its carbon-fibre half-fairing is equipped with pairs of aerodynamic fins on either side, shaped to provide downforce at high speed.

The H2 doesn't have those but its mirrors were carefully shaped by the Aerospace division. And the standard model's plastic bodywork shares a literally brilliant finish from mirror-like paintwork that contains genuine silver, is applied by hand and is unique in the automotive industry. The roadgoing Ninja also shares a host of other neat details, from its LED lights and neatly machined top yoke to the sculpted tailpiece.

Of course the powerplant, almost all of which is common to both models, is special too: a 998cc, 16-valve four like that of the ZX-10R, but an all new design created to be boosted by a supercharger, which was also purpose-designed and produced in-house by Kawasaki. It's the firm's proud boast that the Ninjas were created to showcase the giant corporation's numerous divisions including Aerospace, and that no other firm could have built them – and it's hard to argue with that.

Even the chassis is like nothing Kawasaki has ever built before, based on a tubular steel trellis frame that would be Ducati-like if it wasn't painted metalflake green instead of red, and didn't employ a four-cylinder engine as a stress-bearing member to locate the single-sided aluminum swing-arm. Both bikes have KYB suspension at front and rear, with the 43mm forks' adjusters set into the green tops that poke through the immaculately machined top yoke.









The standard H2's maximum output of 197bhp at 11,000rpm (without ram-air) puts it on par with the latest crop of super-sports bikes, but its torque output before that point far exceeds that of conventional engines, and the Ninjas aren't intended to be sports bikes. Their riding position is more relaxed than the ZX-10R's, with handlebars 10mm higher and wider, footrests further forward by a similar amount, and a more roomy and generously padded seat, which has 15mm of forward/back adjustability and is shaped to give support under hard acceleration.

Any suggestion that the H2 is a slightly more comfy sports bike disappears the moment you open its throttle in the lower gears. The response is sudden, to say the least, as the supercharger kicks in to send the bike lurching forward with an abruptness that makes fine control difficult. Aiming the H2 around the Losail circuit for the first few laps, my mind flashed back to the morning's press conference and the phrase: "demands the razor-sharp reactions of an experienced rider". The words were written about the original 750cc H2 two-stroke triple of 1972 but ring true of its latest descendant.

The Ninja is as demanding as it's powerful, but you learn to deal with it to some extent. And one thing's for sure: this thrilling supercharged brute demands maximum concentration. I was wary of opening the throttle at the apex of the turns (not least because one fast and experienced rider had high-sided himself into hospital the day before) and found the best solution was to finish braking slightly early, then dial in a little throttle and boost before the apex of a turn so the bike was steady at full lean and able to accelerate more smoothly.





IT'S THE FIRM'S PROUD BOAST THAT THE NINJAS WERE CREATED TO SHOWCASE THE GIANT CORPORATION'S NUMEROUS DIVISIONS INCLUDING AEROSPACE, AND THAT NO OTHER FIRM COULD HAVE BUILT THEM – AND IT'S HARD TO ARGUE WITH THAT!



As the boost built (not that I could tell from the small, hard-to-read gauge) and the bike tore forward it was difficult to be sure exactly what the traction control was doing, except that it usefully kept the front wheel near the ground as the Ninja catapulted down the following straight. Its monstrous midrange power delivery meant it revved even quicker than normally aspirated bikes, its quick-shifter (which worked flawlessly, but only on up-shifts) helped feed it gears, and its respectably tall screen meant I could keep my head out of the wind-blast. The standard exhaust's muted sound was soon lost to the wind, but the supercharger compensated with a twittering sound on a closed throttle.

With a kerb weight of 238kg the H2 is notably heavier than a top sports bike, but it handled very well. Kawasaki say they chose the trellis frame partly to aid cooling but mainly because it allows a little flex that aids stability at very high speeds. The bike lived up to that by being rock solid in a straight line and composed in bends, especially after the mechanics had firmed both ends slightly. The Öhlins electronic steering damper, which adjusts according to speed and acceleration, doubtless also contributed.





The relatively wide bars helped with manoeuvrability, and Bridgestone slicks (which are standard fitment on the H2R; the H2 will come with street legal Battlax RS10FGs) ensured heaps of grip. There was plenty of braking power too, with the front blend of 330mm discs and Brembo radial calipers biting hard and refusing to fade even when the H2R was repeatedly hauled down from almost 320km/h, though the ABS cut in earlier than the best rival systems.

These Ninjas aren't designed to be practical, but the H2 will make a handy ZZR-style roadster, provided you don't need to carry a pillion. The 17-litre tank capacity means range won't be huge but the bike is roomy, gives decent wind protection, and has excellent ride quality, helped by a fairly generous 135mm of rear wheel travel from its shock. The classy looking instrument panel includes fuel consumption and lap time info, and can be operated from the bars. Mirrors are wide and clear, at least until the blue flashing lights appear.

Even so, by most objective criteria neither Ninja makes a lot of sense. They're more difficult to ride than most conventional superbikes, have fewer safety aids and would be slower around a racetrack. The H2R can't be ridden on the road, and will need quietening before it can even be used on most track days.



And of course their prices are high. The H2 is more expensive than any of the hugely capable super-sports bikes from rival firms, and the R-model costs almost twice as much as that. But how can you put a value on that supercharged stomp, or the thrill of the blown four's unique shriek? Nothing else comes remotely close. Added to which, both models' beauty and rarity should ensure that resale values remain very high.

Most of all, what's not to like about a Kawasaki approach that said, "We're going to build a pair of bikes that showcase the best of our company, that are different to anything ever built both technically and visually, and are as exciting as the legendary machines that made us famous more than 40 years ago." That sounds like a very admirable aim to me – and after riding them, there's no doubt that these insane Ninjas hit the target in every respect.

H2 TECH

The basic 998cc, 16-valve powerplant is all new, not a revamped ZX-10R unit, despite the obvious similarities and identical dimensions of 76 x 55mm. Supercharged engines like these generate a lot of heat and put huge demand on parts such as bearings, so the H2 lump was designed to put up with up to twice as much stress as a conventionally aspirated engine. Pistons are cast, rather than forged, to cope better with very high temperatures, and have flat tops to reduce compression from the ZX-10R's 13:1 to under 9:1.

The all-important supercharger was designed specifically for this job at specialist divisions within the huge Kawasaki group of companies. It turns at 9.2 times the speed of the crankshaft, so at the H2R's maximum of 14,000rpm it's spinning at roughly 130,000rpm and cramming lots of mixture into the engine's combustion chambers. It's located behind the cylinders, generates 2.4 times atmospheric pressure and feeds a rigid aluminium airbox.

To withstand the extreme heat of the supercharged combustion the exhaust valves are made from two materials, Inconel and steel, that are friction-welded together at their centres. The two engines are very similar, the only differences being the camshafts, head gaskets and clutch. But their outputs are very different: the standard H2 makes 197bhp (200PS) at 11,000rpm, or 207bhp with ram-air; the H2R puts out a staggering 319bhp (326PS) when ram-air is taken into account. Kawasaki insist that the H2 can't be converted to H2R specification, though that might not prevent people trying.

The chassis is unlike anything that Kawasaki has built before, especially for

a four-cylinder engine. The steel tubes are of differing dimensions, laser cut to ensure accuracy, partially hand-welded and finished in metalflake Kawasaki green. The firm says this frame design was chosen, instead of the familiar aluminium beam layout, because it allows a little flex, which improves stability at very high speed. The layout also allows engine heat to escape and gives room for the H2's single air duct from the fairing nose, and the H2R's similar carbon-fibre duct on each side.

The rear subframe is aluminium, as is the single-sided swing-arm, chosen to allow room on the right side for the exhaust's silencer – which in the case of the standard H2 is a large and ugly device that some importers are replacing with a more attractive and doubtless more tuneful Akrapovic can. (The H2R has a racepipe that will require quietening even for track days!)

Inevitably the Ninja H2 is heavier than a conventional superbike, with a kerb weight of 238kg (to the H2R's 216kg), but it gives away nothing at all in trickness. There's no skimping with the cycle parts, which are shared by both models. Suspension is by KYB, including 43mm forks with Air-Oil Separate cartridges, developed in motocross. Brakes are a blend of 330mm discs and Brembo radial calipers, with a revised version of the ZX-10R's race ABS.





IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SPEED AND EXCITEMENT, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE WITH THE NINJAS...

SATOAKI ICHI, PROJECT LEADER

"We heard a lot of customers, and also people inside Kawasaki, saying that nowadays motorcycle performance is getting better and better, the bikes are easier to control, but there is something missing – and that's the excitement of riding. At Kawasaki our core brand is performance and excitement, so we felt a strong need to develop something very special to satisfy those customers' feelings.

"The H2 project was started a little more than two years ago but we had already investigated a lot regarding supercharger technology, starting seven years ago. We looked not only at performance oriented superchargers but other directions like eco- or smaller capacity engines. We have plenty of possibilities and we think that definitely supercharging is one of the key technologies for Kawasaki. Being able to produce the supercharger in-house brings a lot of possibilities, so it's an important direction for the future.

"For our first bike with a supercharger we wanted to go in a typical Kawasaki direction, performance, so we decided to go with the H2 and H2R concept. We set out to develop both models from the beginning, and the H2R development led the project. The maximum horsepower of a [conventionally aspirated] bike was around 200bhp so we set the target at around 1.5 times that. We could have gone to 400bhp but then the engine design got much heavier. We wanted to develop an enjoyable bike, so we decided to stop at around 300bhp.

"The H2 is not designed to cut every second on lap time. We wanted an enjoyable, high-performance sports bike. We targeted a customer who is experienced, maybe with a ZZR1400, so the age is relatively high. So we made the seat reasonably thick, and the handlebar position a little bit more upright to give a more comfortable riding position.

"The main reason for using a trellis frame was stability. A ZX-10R type twin-spar frame is too rigid if you have 300bhp. The bike gets too nervous, so only a limited number of people like professional riders can handle it. That's why we decided to use something a little more flexible: to absorb the external noise. With steel you can enjoy 300bhp!

"In the future we might use the trellis layout for other engines, because through the H2 development we learned a lot about the capabilities of this type of frame. That gives us a chance to use one again. Maybe it won't be completely the same type of frame but there will be things we learnt with this project that we can utilise for other bikes." ■





KAWASAKI NINJA H2 [H2R] (2015)

ENGINE TYPE
Liquid-cooled transverse four
VALVE ARRANGEMENT
DOHC, 16 valves
DISPLACEMENT
998cc
BORE X STROKE
76 x 55mm
COMPRESSION RATIO
8.5:1 [8.3:1]
FUELLING
Fuel-injection with 50mm throttle bodies and Kawasaki supercharger
CLUTCH
Wet multiplate slipper
TRANSMISSION
6-speed with quick-shift
MAXIMUM POWER
197bhp/200PS (147kW) @ 11,000rpm (207bhp with ram-air) [306bhp (228kW) @ 14,000rpm (326PS/319bhp with ram-air)]
MAXIMUM TORQUE
133.5N.m @ 10,500rpm [165N.m @ 12,500rpm]
FRONT SUSPENSION
43mm KYB usd telescopic, 120mm spring travel, adjustment of preload, compression and rebound damping
REAR SUSPENSION
Single shock, 135mm wheel travel, adjustment of preload, high and low-speed compression and rebound damping
FRONT BRAKE
2, Brembo radial four-piston calipers, 330mm discs with ABS
REAR BRAKE
Twin-piston caliper, 250mm disc with ABS
FRONT TYRE
120/70 x 17in Bridgestone Battlax RS10FG [120/60 x 17in Bridgestone BSV01]
REAR TYRE
200/55 x 17in Battlax RS10FG [190/65 x 17in BSV01]
RAKE/TRAIL
24.5 degrees/103mm [25.1 degrees/108mm]
WHEELBASE
1450mm
SEAT HEIGHT
825mm [830mm]
FUEL CAPACITY
17 litres
WEIGHT
238kg wet [216kg]

















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SKULLMONKEE

Just unveiled in Paris, the latest model to come out of Yamaha's 'Yard Built Project', the Wrenchmonkees 'Yard Built XJR1300 Skullmonkee' – built by Danes Per Nielsen and Nicholas Bach.

The original frame is shortened with all unnecessary lugs removed and a new slimmer tank fitted but in this case 'bolt on' components are chosen to create the desired custom effect. Some new CNC items like the yokes and engine covers are produced with other proprietary kit like clip-ons coming from LSL, as well as an MMB digital speedo with a yellow light and below a WM yellow headlight. A well-considered formulae avoiding radical changes to the original machine with a pleasing and business like custom result.

CARBON CREATIONS

Germany's Team Metisse has been known for the superbly built sports machines regularly rolled out by Horst Edler for some time. Now a new range of 'Fullsix' high quality carbon components are being produced to suit BMW, Ducati and MV Agusta machines, Horst explaining that they are all of Autoklave production with best quality prepeg carbon laminated in polished moulds and baked in an autoklave oven. Well finished and accurate they then have two coats of UV resistant ceramic lacquer, very glossy with a three dimensional look, while tanks are produced in one piece – monocoque style - avoiding any possible risk of fuel leaking. Parts are made to match the plastic components of each machine, although special items – typically tanks for race bike applications, are also produced.

Featured here is a current 1199 Panigale with Fullsix tank of 25 litres, seat unit, belly pan, fairing and side panels, mudguards and other guards and covers….all TUV approved. Suitable for the pure enthusiast or racer, the 'Fullsix' range has the carbon to suit almost any model motorcycle.



2015 SUZUKA





'XTR PEPO' is the new Spanish company of Pepo Rossell well known for his work with Ducati, but now he moves on to other machines like pictured here, the '2015 Suzuka'. Donor bike is a 1998 Suzuki Bandit 600 with the original frame modified and a brand new rear frame fitted. A special XTR fairing support is also installed. A Suzuki GSXR 750 from 1992 provides the front end, forks, front mudguard, wheel and brakes with NG rotors, while the rear swinging arms are modified by XTR with rear wheel and footrest supports all coming from the same source.

Fuel tank is original Suzuki, but the fairing is a modified Ducati TT2 with twin Derbi Senda headlights and a revised endurance racer seat unit is also sourced from a TT2. The cockpit is typically Pepo with central fairing support, TT Clock and XTR ergal clip-ons together with adjustable folding brake and clutch levers. K&N race air filters are used and the exhaust system OEM Suzuki, but exiting through a Spark megaphone with a suitable note. Pepo has created a striking looking machine, with performance and style and we can look forward to more from him and XTR in the future.




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V11 TROFEO

First news of the 2015 'V11 Trofeo Kit' from Ghezzi & Brian was recently released, executed to perfection as ever by Bruno Saturno with the Moto Guzzi V11 the beneficiary. Named after the Gentleman Trophy Cup races it reflects the character of many V11 enthusiasts, the sport, track eventing etc. New front and rear frames are supplied in the kit aiding a considerable weight reduction while the riding position is sporty with the rider having a comfortable reach from the new seat unit to the adjustable clip-on handlebars. The digital instrumentation sits inside the new twin headlight racing fairing while fuel tank is original Moto Guzzi and new footrests in ergal. Carbon fibre mirrors are also included in the kit together with silencer bracketry, rear and licence plate lights.



Following Ghezzi & Brian common practice, all components can be installed on a V11 without any modification to the bike itself – and removed if required later leaving the bike in its original condition. The 'V11 Trofeo Kit' does create an exceptional motorcycle which will undoubtedly cause existing V11 owners to start reaching for their wallets…

WUNDERLICH S1000R

Wunderlich have developed an impressive selection of specialist components to suit the current BMW S1000R creating a new image both interesting and practical. A very attractive new twin headlight nacelle and screen catches the eye, but notice the new front mudguard, radiator fairing complete with stainless steel oil and water coolergrills. Now pick up on the new engine side panels and substantial belly pan, rear mudguard, seat unit and license holder. Other minor covers are supplied as well as stock levers resulting in a well thought out transition.



KTM ELECTRICITY

KTM recently announced a new 'Supermoto' version of their successful high performance electric machine…the Freeride E-SM in Barcelona. Powered by the well-proven brushless permanent synchronous motor, it has already proved itself as a performer when things get tough. The frame is steel aluminium composite with top of the line suspension all riding on quality 17" wheels and Pirelli Diablo Rosso tyres all completed with lithium Power Pack output of 21.6hp with 42NM of torque. It even features three power modes to suit those learning right through to advanced riders and is easily road-registered. Keep an eye out as they're due to hit the dealerships soon…



twowheels

Editor
Miles Rangeley (02) 8719 3661
<mrangeley@expresspublications.com.au>

Art Director
Ryan Weeks

Senior Graphic Designer
Roy Delfino

Editorial Enquiries
editorial@twowheels.com.au

Regular Contributors
Don Cox, Damian Cudlin, Doug Jackson, Glynn Kerr, Kevin Magee, Terry Paxton, Steve Martin, Peter Cox, Pax, James Pralija, Mark Boxer, Amy Omara, Brendan Jones

European Correspondent
Roland Brown

Production Manager
Bronwyn Rowe

Production Co-Ordinators
Alex Grosvenor

Creative Director – Leisure & Motoring:
Igor Amedov

Group Publisher – Leisure & Motoring
Glenn Wright

National Advertising Manager
Luke Finn
Ph: 0423 665 384 Fax: (02) 9741 7293
Email: luke@twowheels.com.au

Subscriptions
Free call: 1800 801 647
Fax: (02) 9737 8017
Email: subs@magstore.com.au
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Phone: (02) 8719 3503

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General Manager – Motoring Igor Amedov

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Editorial Contributions And Correspondence
2wheels, 50 Silverwater Road, Silverwater NSW 2128
Email: mrangeley@expresspublications.com.au
Phone: (02) 8719 3663 Fax: (02) 9748 4059

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TW37_08

In GEAR

check out what's new in the shops this month

RADICAL RATCHET

Check out this new item from quality toolmakers GearWrench, the Gimbal Ratchet! The Gimbal ratchet pivots in several directions and works as a palm ratchet for quick ease of use for tightening objects on the fly. It's ideal for places where you may not be able to fit a full size ratchet as it allows a 5° swing arc and will rotate on two planes for easier access.

The GearWrench Gimbal Ratchet is available in ¼" and ½" drives from Masters, Total Tools, Mitre10 and other leading hardware and tool stores...



HOTGRIPS

If you're like us here at the magazine and ride every day of the year, then you have no doubt been braving the cold mornings over the past few weeks. I mean, why let a little cold weather deter you from still riding to and from work? Although there's nothing wrong with making the trip a little more bearable, which is why these latest HotGrips from Oxford are perfect. With 30 years of research and development, the HotGrips are specially designed grips to suit seven different categories; Touring, Sports, Adventure, Cruiser, Commuter, Scooter and ATV. So I think it's fair to say they've got everyone covered.

And if you're concerned about quality, HotGrips are 100% waterproof and include thicker rubber in areas of maximum wear, they're also vibration resistant and feature a diamond tread pattern where maximum grip is required. They only draw less than 4 amps of power too, but have the ability to produce temperatures up to 45°.

HotGrips are available at all reputable motorcycle stores, or to find your closest retailer, log on to; www.ficeda.com.au







ADVENTURE TIME

Continental tyres have long been the desired tyre for Adventure bike riders, and once again they have raised the benchmark with their latest release, Continental TKC70s. With DNA research taken from their already successful TKC80 (20% road / 80% dirt) and Trail Attack 2 (80% road / 20% dirt), the new TKC70 falls somewhere in the middle, (60% road / 40% dirt). With rave reviews from the BMW riders on the latest GS Safari in Tasmania, the new tyres are sure to make an impact in the Adventure bike market.

Some of the features include Multi Grip where an advanced curing method has been used to create a seamless transition from a soft compound on the sides for increased grip, to the firmer compound in the middle of the tyre for better wear. Another notable feature is Rain Grip, which is a specially formulated compound with a delicate balance of Carbon Black for maximum grip and fast warm-up along with Silica for better grip in the wet. As you can see, if you're serious about motorcycle touring and don't mind spending a fair bit of time going bush, the new TKC70 range of tyres from Continental are definitely worth checking out.

They're available now at all reputable motorcycle shops or can be found through Ron Angel Imports on (03) 9464 3366 or at www.ronangel.com.au

ALL-IN-ONE

Bel-Ray's All In One is a fuel treatment formulated to provide all of the necessary chemistry to maximise fuel efficiency and minimise associated fuel problems. It neutralises all of the harmful effects that ethanol has on gasoline and will stabilise gasoline during periods of storage either in the fuel tank or a portable fuel container. The detergent properties will keep fuel lines and associated fuel components free of build-up and gummy residues and will also increase the octane of gasoline allowing for the use of a lower octane fuel with the results of a higher octane alternative. And it's simple to use too with no complicated measuring or mixing. So if like many of us you keep a fuel drum on hand then just add some Bel-Ray All In One to keep it fresh and clean. Bel-Ray products are distributed throughout Australia by Cassons Pty Ltd.



RIDING WITH ZORRO

Looking for a high quality jacket? What about this one by Zorro Leather? Patterned on the Tourmaster, this vintage style jacket reflects the pattern and quality of things made in the past but with the latest materials for top performance. Long cut and long sleeves are made especially for motorcycle riding and there's removable CE approved armour and a removable winter thermal liner for top comfort whatever the season. It also has four external and two internal pockets for extra convenience.

Drop into Factory 10, 95 White St, Mordialloc (0433 106 669) to see it in the flesh or check out www.zorros.net.au and view their wide range of gear.



GET THE BOOT

If you like wearing comfortable boots, maybe you should try a pair of Voyage boots from Forma. Waterproof and made with real leather, the Voyage boot has always been popular but now they've just started to make bigger sizes. Featuring a double density anti-slip sole, leather heal and gear pad protection, padded front plate and plastic ankle protection, as well as an adjustable Velcro and zip closure, safety and comfort is assured when wearing the Voyage boot. Competitively priced, the Forma Voyage boot is available at selected dealers and is distributed Australia wide by Andy Strapz.

For more information, call Andy Strapz on (03) 9770 2207 or log on to their website at; www.andystrapz.com



BOND GRIP

Renthal Quick Bond Grip Glue is a fast acting liquid adhesive, chemically engineered to bond Renthal grips to all handlebars in a matter of minutes. Specially formulated to allow users to apply glue to bar and grip, fit the grip and place into the best position before creating a safe and secure bond between the grips and handlebar. Due to the Quick Bond formula that makes up Renthal Quick Bond Grip Glue, users are recommended to fit grips individually and only apply glue when the grip is ready to be fitted.

Renthal Quick Bond Grip Glue is individually packed in a 20g resealable bottle and is available at all reputable bike shops. Distributed by Cassons Australia PTY Ltd.



FRANDO BRAKES

The Frando Brake System, which was established in 1993 comes from a company who has always been dedicated to designing and manufacturing high performance brake systems for both the automotive and motorcycle industry. Something else to take into account is that Frando products always undergo numerous durability and strength tests before being officially released into the market. Specialising in aftermarket radial master cylinders, hydraulic clutch conversions, radial callipers and other performance braking accessories, there's a good chance they have just what you need. Maybe you're planning to convert your old cable operated clutch to a hydraulic system, well you can by simply purchasing a hydraulic clutch slave cylinder and Master cylinder package with a Goodridge approved brake line. Even better to know all their products come with a 2 year worldwide warranty.

For more information about the exciting new range of Frando products contact the team at John Stamnas on 07 54 477 411 or log on to; www.johnstamnos.com.au



In GEAR

check out what's new in the shops this month





THE RIGHT TOOLS

There's nothing better to ease the mind than knowing you've got the right tools to get you out of nearly every mechanical problem you might experience on the side of the road. Yet to achieve this you need a good tool kit, one that not only has the required tools, but is designed to easily fit amongst your gear. That's where the Pro Series Moto Tool kit from Kenma is the perfect addition for your next trip. Featuring high quality motorcycle specific tools including an extendable 3/8 drive Ratchet with FIX button option for Hi Torque, screwdriver handle bit driver with removable 100mm extension, multi grip pliers, ¼ to 3/8 socket adaptor, tyre pressure gauge, spark plug socket, open ring spanners, and much more, there won't be many other occasions where you'll find yourself stranded.

Pro Series Tool kits are now available from your favourite motorcycle dealer anywhere in Australia. For more information or to find your nearest stockist, log on to; www.kenma.com.au

PROTECT YOURSELF

Draggin Jeans may have been producing jeans since 1997, but you can rest assured they never stop striving to find new and innovative ways to design their range of motorcycle protective jeans. This is illustrated in their latest BlackGen range which now provides riders with a seamless looking design, in black of course. With no visible panels, no external seams, it offers a pair of jeans that will suit just about any attire, while of course offering top protection with the use of Dyneema's amazing strength (40% stronger than Kevlar and 15 times stronger than steel). The added benefit of the sports liner keeps riders comfortable by allowing the material to breathe better, making it possible you to wear the jeans all year round. I've personally been wearing these jeans for about two months now and would have to say they're one of the most comfortable designs of Draggin Jeans I've ever worn (MR).

For more information on the BlackGen range along with Draggin Jeans' their other motorcycle gear, check out their website at www.dragginjeans.net.au or to place an order, simply call (03) 9646 0377 or email sales@dragginjeans.net





FRESH AIR!

There's nothing better than when your bike is getting all the clean air it needs, which is why DNA have recently released a new high-flow air filter specifically designed for the new Kawasaki Ninja H2! Not only will it increase filtering efficiency up to 98-99% with four layers of DNA Cotton, it also increases the flow much more than the stock paper filter. And one of the best features is the simple installation, with information on how to do it found in your Kawasaki workshop manual.

So if you're looking to feed your H2 even more clean air, you definitely need to check out the DNA high-flow air filter designed for road and race use; available now at all reputable motorcycle shops or check out at www.kenma.com.au to find your nearest stockist.

NEW SPEED-R series2

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KERR British-born, US-based designer Glynn Kerr is the President of the Motorcycle Design Association

THE POWER OF ENGINES

Slowly but surely, over time the lines of design on a bike changed with the shape of the engine...

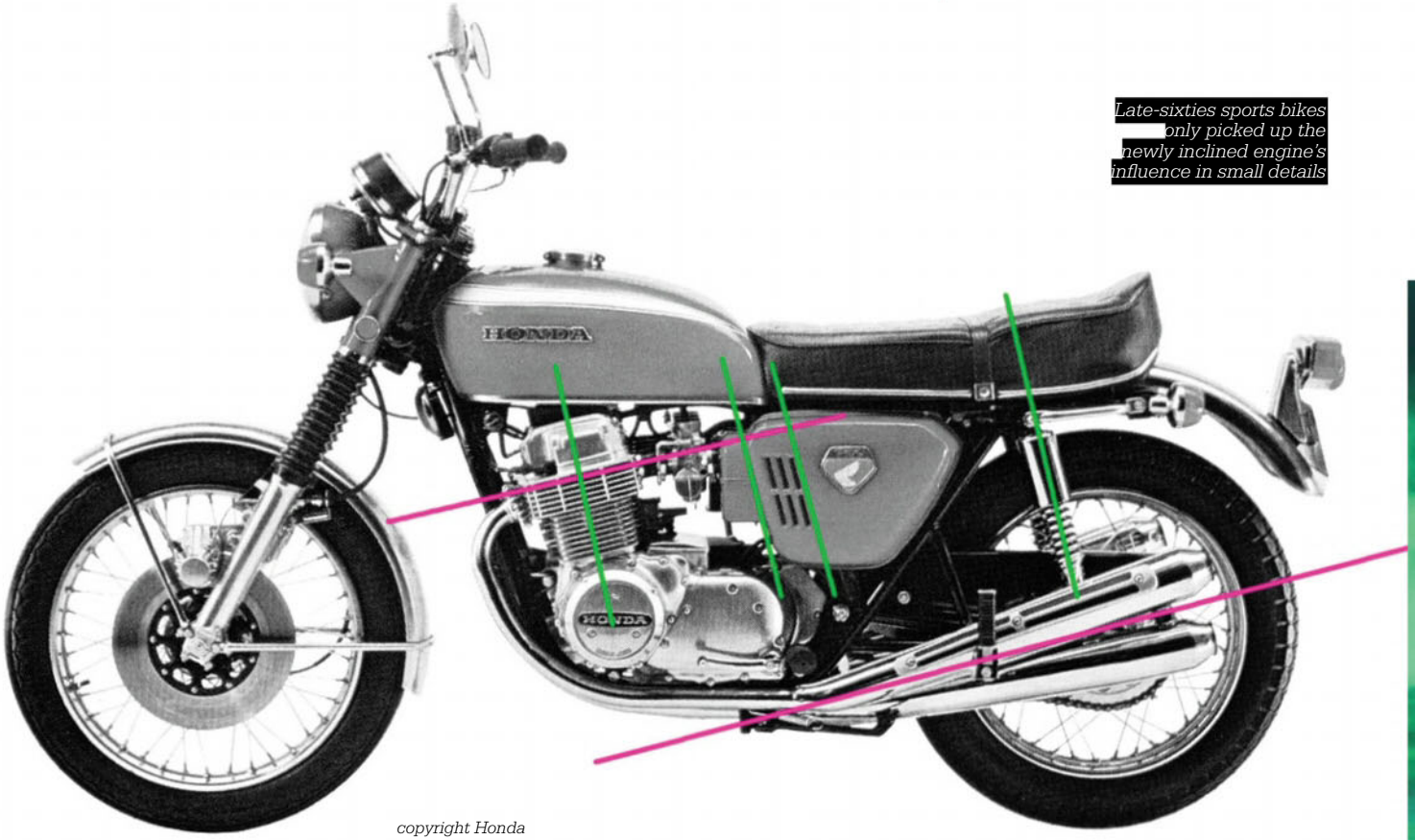
The engine is the focal point of any motorcycle, and rightly so. It's the living heart of the beast, giving our machines energy, and transforming them into something more than just cold steel. A bike with a dead engine is the definition of impotence - it's less effective than a bicycle. There's nothing worse than hitting the starter, and being rewarded only with silence, or standing marooned by the roadside while drivers of lesser vehicles pass by smugly. Most of us have been there at some point.

The engine defines a bike's dynamic capabilities, and provides the major part of its character, so it's hardly surprising that bike designers take the engine as the starting point for their main styling cues. The governing factor is the cooling fins, the angle of which dictates the primary styling lines for the entire bike. Even if the bike is water cooled, the styling emphasis is almost always perpendicular to the angle of the cylinder.

Until the 1970s, most engines were vertical, so the bike's main styling lines ran horizontal. This gave a balanced, but rather static look by today's standards. Panther Slopers aside, the only real exception was the V-twin, which seemed to fit naturally into the laid-back chopper look - though at the time, nobody knew why. But think 'cooling fins', and the whole thing falls into place. Whereas modern sporting vees have picked up on the leading cylinder for their nose-down look, custom bikes used the rear cylinder to harmonise the hard-tail line that sweeps down towards the back.

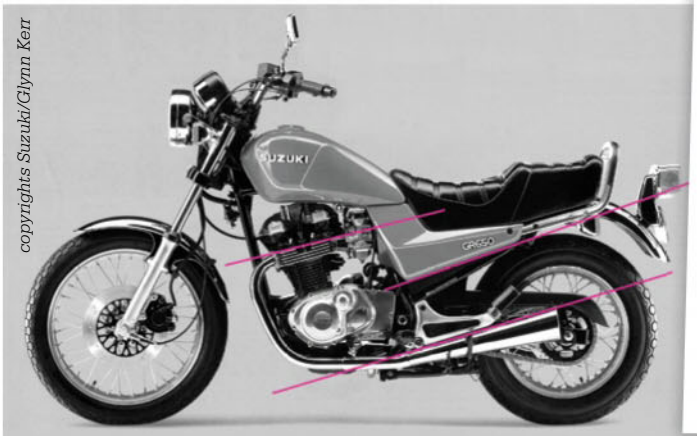
During the seventies, cylinders on singles and inline multis gradually became inclined towards the front. This was done to lower the center of gravity, and to gain space for the ever-growing air-boxes. Styling lines followed. Some early examples, like the Honda CB-750 Four, still ran with the traditional, horizontal look, even though the engine was slightly inclined. Perhaps surprisingly, this doesn't look too out of place, thanks in part to the side cover and rear spring, which follow the cylinder's line. The main savior though is the upswept exhaust, which, if you take a median between the two silencers, you will find exactly follows the angle of the cooling fins. Whether this was done consciously, or simply because it 'looked right' isn't known, but around this era, my bet would be on the latter. The first bike that really exploited the feature, and by connection, clearly understood the principle, was the 1980 Suzuki Katana.

As engine angles increased, so the down-force styling lines became more dramatic, peaking in the eighties with Yamaha's Genesis engine layout. These units were inclined at 45º, which was a little too much for the Yamaha designers, who kept to nearer 20º for the main styling on the first FZ and FZX 750s. To compensate, they chose to take the cylinder angle as a cue for the leading edges of the bodywork to key the mechanics in with the plastic. With the Super Ténéré, one of my own early projects with Yamaha, we went a little more radical, especially in the graphics, but even so, only a few secondary lines could afford to follow such a steep incline. These were early,



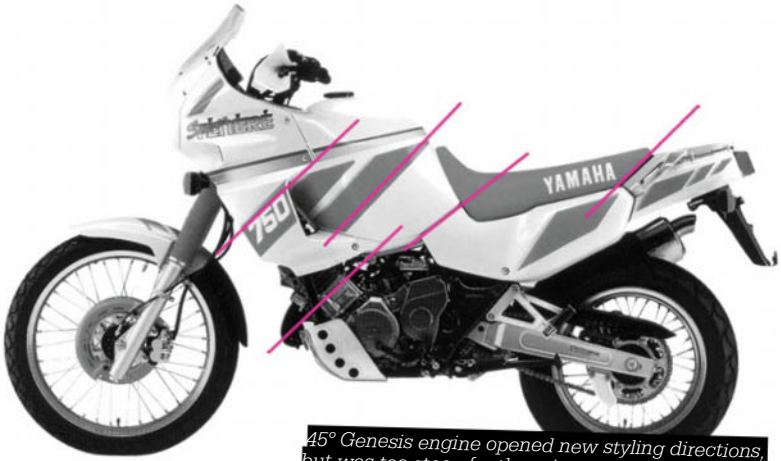
Late-sixties sports bikes only picked up the newly inclined engine's influence in small details

copyright Honda



copyrights Suzuki/Glynn Kerr

Body lines mostly follow the cooling fines - even here, when they should all be sloping in the opposite angle



copyright Yamaha

45° Genesis engine opened new styling directions, but was too steep for the primary lines - only some graphics and a few details followed it



Target Design's 1980 Suzuki Katana was the first to acknowledge the engine line as the predominant styling factor

copyright Suzuki/Target Design

ACTION DOESN'T HAPPEN WITHOUT SOME FORM OF MOTOR, SO THEY LOGICALLY FORM THE CENTERPIECE OF MOTORCYCLE DESIGN

exploratory days with motorcycle styling, but it quickly became clear that the angle of the down-force line has its limits. After a point, the dynamic look turns into a braking effect, which is counterproductive. In the same way, BMW's K1600 suffers a certain disconnect between the extremely slanted engine and the body styling, although as the hefty and complex touring bodywork dwarfs the engine, the effect is somewhat reduced.

Rather than just letting the engine influence the styling, some models actively encourage it to be dominant. One good example is Yamaha's MT-01, which followed its spiritual predecessor, the V-Max, in looking like a large engine shoehorned into a relatively small bike. That said, much of the latter's impact was an illusion, with purely cosmetic parts tarted up to look like intake trumpets - though with 145bhp on tap in 1985, nobody really cared.

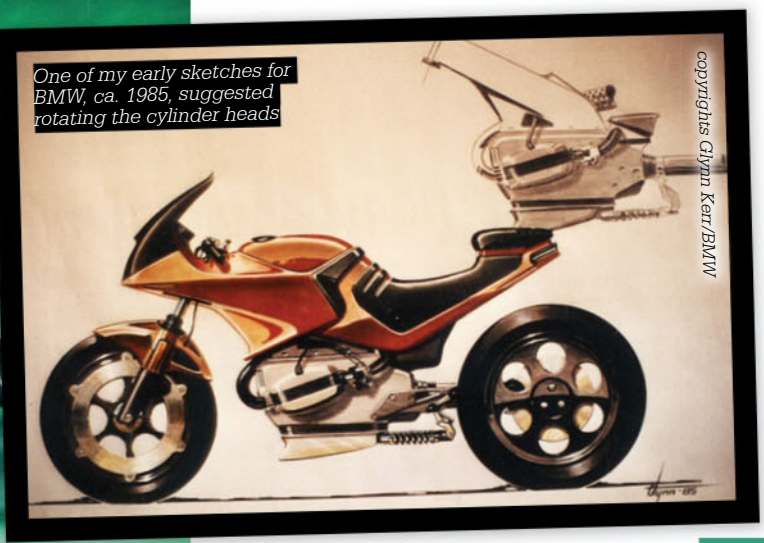
Longitudinal vee-configurations like the MT-01 give a large profile, and allow a bike to appear 'all engine' in the vital side-on view, hence their frequent adoption on large muscle bikes. Transverse engines make up for their relatively small profile in width, although they require tight packaging and plenty of fill-in panels to look strong from the side. Boxers and transverse vees are a law unto themselves, freeing Guzzis, BMWs, Pan Europeans and Gold Wings of any stylistic impositions from their engines. Their problem here is how to integrate the width. Early BMWs can also join the list, although the more recent ones have the cylinders rotated just enough to give a lead for the down-force styling line following the cylinder head angle. I might be partly to blame - when I was with BMW in the early eighties, I made a couple of sketches of sporty boxers, and couldn't resist twisting those cylinders around a tad. It just looked right, although at the time the engineers protested that it couldn't be done. History shows they found a way.

Fully-faired models often try to create a link to the engine with features such as shut lines, air ducts and scoops carefully angled to match the cylinders lurking beneath the plastic. We can all imagine



copyright BMW

BMW's 'flying brick' was not easy to style around



One of my early sketches for BMW, ca. 1985, suggested rotating the cylinder heads

copyrights Glynn Kerr/BMW



copyrights Suzuki/Glynn Kerr

Body lines mostly follow the cooling fines - even here, when they should all be sloping in the opposite angle



Recent BMW boxers have pivoted the cylinders to flow with the styling lines

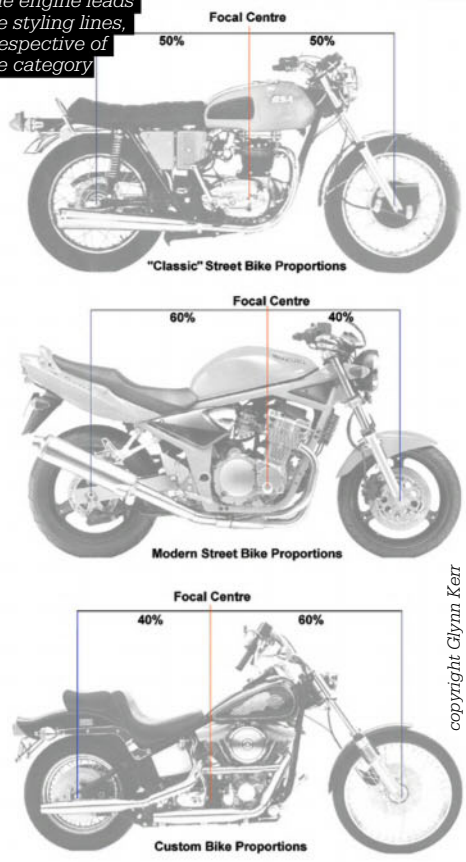
copyright BMW



copyright Glynn Kerr

Many electric bikes replace the expected engine area with a big sheet of black plastic

The engine leads the styling lines, irrespective of the category



copyright Glynn Kerr

roughly what that engine looks like, so the mental connection works.

Scooters are a whole different ball game. They deliberately break any connection, and in many cases attempt to downplay or hide the engine altogether. The idea is to isolate the rider from the noisy, dirty part that most scooter riders aren't interested in anyway.

And then there's alternative energy. Some electric bike manufacturers have started to make an effort to generate a more technical look, the Brammo Empulse being a good example. But for the most part, electrical parts are visually less than emotive than mechanical ones, and batteries are huge bricks that need to be covered to stop them getting wet. Water and high-output electrics don't mix too well. As a result, many electric bikes have a huge lump of black plastic where an engine would normally reside. This seems lacking to all of us who have grown up with the luxury of beautiful mechanical systems - an inadequacy supported by the absence of drama in action.

Irrespective of the source, action doesn't happen without some form of motor, so they logically form the centerpiece of motorcycle design. A bike is like a living, breathing beast, and it deserves regular exercise. Not to fire it up and take it out for a spin occasionally is to turn your garage into a museum. And because static displays fail to transmit the noise, smell and excitement that form the very soul of the machine, museums are usually a less fulfilling experience than they should be. It's the difference between wild animals and taxidermy. So while I love to see the trailered concours restorations on display at shows, my own bikes will always show a few signs of wear and tear. Once I'm too scared to take them out of the garage and use them in the way their creators intended, they turn from motorcycles into exhibits. And that, to my mind, is missing the point. ■



The Brammo Empulse is one of the few electric bikes to look remotely mechanical

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FULL OF FUN





After enjoying the ride so much on the little CBR 300R, it made me realise that these bikes aren't being produced just to suit learners...

Feature by Steve Martin

Honda have always been very good at reading the market, which is why they have been the leading and perhaps strongest of the Japanese manufacturing companies for a long period now. They are a company that reacts quickly to changing trends when it has to.

In the case of the CBR300 they are starting to claim back some ground against its main competitor in the LAMs sector, The Ninja 300. Yes the Ninja has changed a lot from its 250 counterpart and yes the Ninja has more top end power by a claimed seven horsepower, but Honda have kept things simple in their upgrade effort over the CBR 250. By retaining the single cylinder

It's evident the little CBR is enjoyable to ride, especially after Steve threw the keys to current World Superbike Champion Sylvain Guintoli to enjoy a few quick laps around Phillip Island in the middle of the race weekend.



configuration which was used in the 250 and adding an extra 8mm of stroke to the con rod length, Honda were actually able to extract more torque than the Ninja's twin cylinder engine, all this with 10cc less capacity. That's not all though, as in the learner sector a single cylinder design can offer other benefits like cheaper servicing and also a lighter overall weight, which is certainly the case with this CBR. At 164 Kilograms (with ABS) the little CBR is very light and nearly ten kilograms lighter than the Ninja 300. The CBR is also an attractive bike. I really like its lines and although it looks small I found it ergonomically easy to fit on to and reach the ground. Importantly I found the bike well balanced when I was pushing it around the garage or parking it at my local café, which once again is a big asset for a learner as it's not an intimidating machine. It's all too easy to be scared of a bike if you can't park it or are scared of dropping it every time you make a tight turn, and once again this is perhaps an area where the light Honda excels.

I jumped on the CBR on an overcast drizzling morning which wasn't the ideal time to ride a test bike for the first time of any type, but nonetheless, it turned out that the weather and conditions helped the CBR teach me an important lesson. You don't need cubes to have fun. Sure it's a bike aimed at the learner or less confident rider, but in saying that it's also a bike that gave me a lot of pleasure. I'm used to riding the current crop of Superbikes









around where an extra mm of throttle can mean the difference between the speed limit or a monster fine, and surprisingly to me, I enjoyed the fact that on the CBR 300 I could actually twist the throttle and let the bike rev through the gears without breaking any land speed records.

Here I was enjoying myself on a learner bike in less than ideal conditions but why? Simply because I was able to use seventy percent of the bike's attributes compared to five percent on a thousand. Mind you, the Honda is still fast enough to leave cars for dead off the lights and although I have heard of some people complaining of a lack of power for certain situations, in general, I had no problems whatsoever with the power. The area where Honda have worked most to improve response is in the low to middle area of the power range, and that is where the bike will spend ninety percent of its time over its life. Don't expect to blow past a Kawasaki Ninja 300 on the race track, but if you are a road rider and riding to keep your license the little Honda does exactly what it needs to do.

Handling is very precise with a nice chassis that gives a good solid feel and although I haven't ridden a Moto 3 bike, I imagine it wouldn't feel too much different to the CBR .The skinny 110 front and 140 rear tyre make this bike the quickest reacting machine I've ridden in a long time. I basically only had to think about changing my line and the bike reacted with very little physical effort. The brakes were fantastic matching the quality of the chassis and with the addition of ABS, an extra safety margin is lurking in the background. I feel it is a very valid addition on a bike aimed at the beginner market. I don't care who you are but ABS is a must on the road nowadays and I was glad that I had it on the CBR, especially considering the slippery conditions.



"A SINGLE CYLINDER DESIGN CAN OFFER OTHER BENEFITS LIKE CHEAPER SERVICING AND ALSO A LIGHTER OVERALL WEIGHT."

My ride was from my home on the outskirts of Melbourne through the hills then out on to the freeway and down to Phillip Island, which allowed me to get a good idea about what it would be like to live with the CBR in varying conditions, including the street cred value. Arriving at World Superbikes in front of thousands of people expecting me to be on a hyper bike was the test. No need to worry though as the sharp looking CBR gained credibility instantly. What I can genuinely say is that this CBR is a very fun bike, a fact reinforced when the current World Champ Sylvain Guintoli offered to have a play on the bike in the middle of a race weekend. I started to understand that maybe little bikes aren't just for learners only…

On my run back to Melbourne after my day out I didn't feel cheated in any way that I was on the 300. I enjoyed my time on the bike, it was effortless on the freeway and at no stage became uncomfortable. And at a retail of $5999 for the ABS model, I think it's fair to say its bringing affordability back to motorcycling. ■







"THE BRAKES WERE FANTASTIC MATCHING THE QUALITY OF THE CHASSIS AND WITH THE ADDITION OF ABS, AN EXTRA SAFETY MARGIN IS LURKING IN THE BACKGROUND."



HONDA CBR 300R

ENGINE TYPE:
286cc liquid-cooled single-cylinder four-stroke
BORE AND STROKE:
76mm x 63mm
INDUCTION:
PGM-Fi, 38mm throttle body
IGNITION:
Computer-controlled digital transistorized with electronic advance
COMPRESSION RATIO:
10.7:1
VALVE TRAIN:
DOHC; four valves per cylinder
TRANSMISSION:
Six-speed
FRONT BRAKES:
Single 296mm disc
REAR BRAKES:
Single 220mm disc
FRONT SUSPENSION:
37mm Telescopic fork
REAR SUSPENSION:
Pro-Link single shock with five positions of spring preload adjustability
FRONT TYRE:
110/70-17
REAR TYRE:
140/70-17
RAKE:
25.30 degrees
TRAIL:
98mm
WHEELBASE:
1380 mm
SEAT HEIGHT:
779 mm
WET WEIGHT:
160kg, 163kg(ABS)
FUEL CAPACITY:
13 Liters
MODEL ID:
CBR300R
AVAILABLE COLOURS:
Black, Red, Pearl White/Red/Blue, Matte Black Metallic/Yellow
PRICE:
$5,999 (ABS)
$5,699 (non ABS)
WARRANTY:
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Feature by Miles Rangeley

TOURING TIME

After testing the CFMoto 650NKs around the city for a few months, the time has come to return the bike, which is why we thought it fitting to get it out of town for a few days...

You may remember we took delivery of a long-term test bike a few months back, a CFMoto 650NKs. Well, after picking it up and running it around town for a while, Magoo took it for a few weeks to see what it would be like as a daily commuter from his place on the Northern side of Sydney to Fox Sports in the city. And if you recall his article in the April issue, he rated it to be a very competent bike, especially through the peak hour traffic.

Okay, so it's a great little bike for negotiating the city streets, but what is it like out of town and on a trip? It was a question I had been asked more than once by interested onlookers, and one that needed to be addressed. So with a couple of days spare between deadlines, I took the opportunity to load up some gear and get out of Sydney. That was of course after the bike was picked up by CFMoto and given its first service up at Richmond Motorcycles in Richmond NSW. It was already running fine, but when Bob Walter, Sydney Marketing Manager for CFMoto heard of the impending trip, he offered to pick up the bike and organise the service. I'm not sure about you, but I find it refreshing to see a manufacturer going the extra mile just to make sure everything is up to scratch. Granted I'm not a customer, but I'd like to think that the articles we write in the magazine, if the bike is reputable of course, could very well lead to potential customers.

Well, after the bike arrived back to the

office, I scribbled a couple of days on the calendar and made my escape the following week. First up it was a matter of seeing how much I could pack, and being a short trip, only the one bag was needed. There are of course accessories available for the CFMoto range, but with an Andy Strapz bag sitting in the cupboard at work, I was sorted, especially knowing the quality of Andy Strapz gear. Fitting it to the bike wasn't a problem either, made even easier with the pillion grab rails at the rear. Once everything was packed and tied on, I was out of the smog of Sydney and heading towards Batemans Bay before continuing on to Canberra. It was a great day's ride and one that the CFMoto handled perfectly. Sure the vibrations through the bars got a little more noticeable after a couple of hundred kilometres, but nothing too aggravating.

What did impress me was just how comfortable it was to ride over longer distances. Sometimes in the past testing touring bikes with all the bells and whistles I've still felt a little sore in the lower back or the neck. Not on the CFMoto, I felt like I could ride another 100km at least by the time I rolled into the Nation's Capital. A lot of this has to do with the more upright riding position with the bars being situated close enough to leave your arms comfortable and relaxed. The only thing I did feel was a little ache in my shoulders, but I was riding into a headwind for a good part of the afternoon which didn't help.

Fuel economy on the 650 has always been good around town, but I thought it might be a little better once out on the open road, although surprisingly it only offered about another 30-40ks per tank. Either way, it's still more than economical and will get you to the next fuel stop without a problem, as long as you're not tearing across the Nullabor, although having said that, it wouldn't be my bike of choice for a trip like that.

So being a long term test bike, we've had the opportunity of spending more time than usual with the CFMoto, and the general consensus is that it's a great little motorcycle that would suit riders of various experience. Not only is it user friendly for a learner to ride, it also packs enough power for more experienced riders to enjoy. I'm just pleasantly surprised that a Chinese built motorcycle could be so well constructed for such a low price. It's also refreshing to be proven wrong, because I'll be honest in saying that on first learning of the CFMoto branching out from scooters to motorcycles, I was a little skeptical of what a Chinese motorcycle would be like. And you too may feel the same, until you ride one of course. It's like the old saying, 'you get what you pay for', although in this case, it seems you get a little more... ■











ITALIAN

Once again we take a trip to the Barber Motorcycle Museum in Alabama, although this time it's for the Italian motorcycle enthusiasts...

Feature by Phil Aynsley



PRIDE



The Barber Motorcycle Museum in the US houses one of the biggest collections of rare motorcycles under the one roof. With numerous models from most manufacturers on the planet, it's definitely somewhere that should be on your list of places to visit if you're ever in that part of the country. The last feature a couple of issues back concentrated on the motorcycles made famous in history through racing, all over the globe. This time we spend time enjoying what the Italians had to offer, which was some of the classiest motorcycles in the world. Enjoy as we take another stroll down memory lane… ■



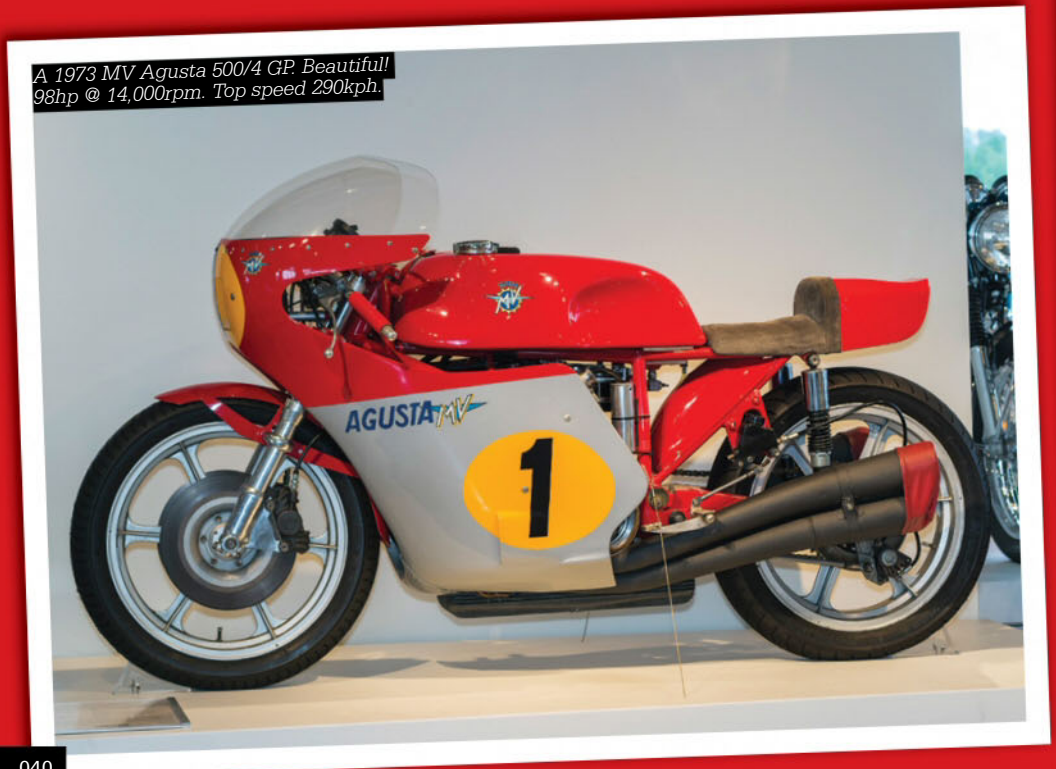


MONDIAL 1956 125CC DOHC

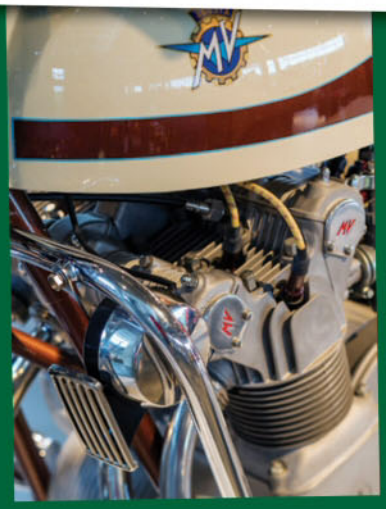
A famous name in GP racing is F. B. Mondial. This their 1956 125cc DOHC bike which only raced that one year in this form. Earlier versions of the 125 had the flywheel mounted externally, while the 1957 version changed from the short vertical bevel shaft driving the camshafts to a cascade of gears, still on the right hand side of the motor.



A rare 2007 NCR New Blue sits above a 1979 900SS. The New Blue was a tribute (instigated by Ducati North America) to the famous Daytona winning Ducati ridden by Cook Neilson in 1977. Based on the 1000 Sport Classic, the limited production run was initially of track only bikes, priced at US$75,000, but a small number of road-going versions were later offered with stock engines.



A 1973 MV Agusta 500/4 GP. Beautiful! 98hp @ 14,000rpm. Top speed 290kph.

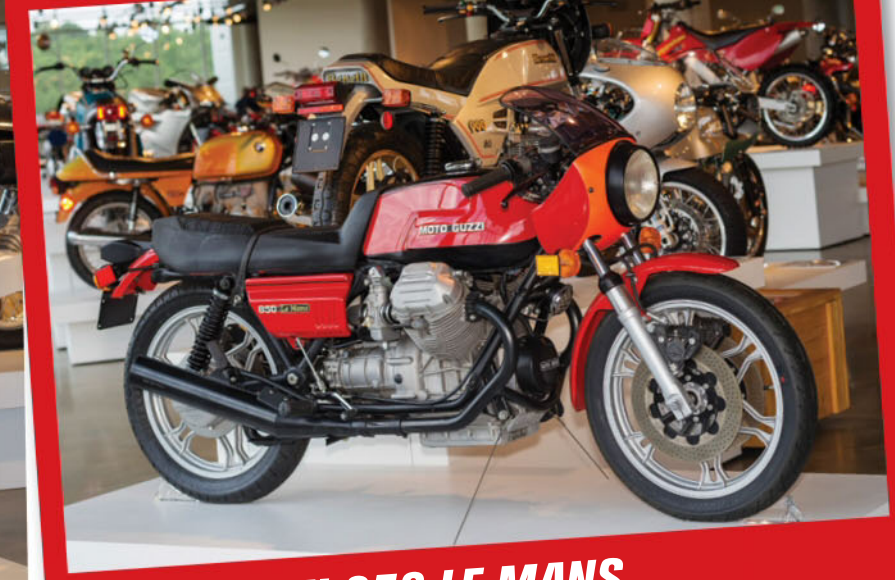


MV AGUSTA 750 GT

With only 50 made, the MV Agusta 750 GT was a rare and expensive (three times the price of a Honda CB750) beast. The Australian importer, Bob Jane, only sold about three. 68hp @ 8,450rpm. Top speed 190kph.



All the main flavours of road-going MV fours! The rare, with only 50 built, 1973 750 GT (left) was a major improvement over the original 1967 600/4, of which 127 were made (right). A 1972 750 Sport fitted with the optional full fairing sits above a 1977 750S America, which was the final major version of the classic MV four (and actually 789cc).



MOTO GUZZI 850 LE MANS

Produced between 1976-78 the Moto Guzzi 850 Le Mans is commonly referred to as the Mark I. Produced in two batches, this is a Series 2 model with the rectangular tail light design. 71hp @ 7,300rpm. Top speed 200kph. Also pictured here, the Benelli Sei was a development of the 1974 750 six. Less than 2000 of the 900cc version were produced. 80hp @ 8,400rpm. Top speed 210kph.



PARILLA 1957 DESERT GREYHOUND

The Slughi (Desert Greyhound) was first shown at the Milan Show in 1957 with production commencing the following year. It was available with either a 125cc 2-stroke motor or 99cc and 125cc OHV 4-stroke engines. This is the 99cc version. While Parilla had high hopes for the Slughi, sales were disappointing and production ceased in 1964. In the US they were imported by Cosmo Motors and sold under the Ramjet (or Ramjet Streamliner) name. 8hp at 6,700rpm. 75kg. Top speed 105kph.



The museum has a number of classic MV Agusta race bikes. Here are a pair of 500s - a 1954 four (4) and a 1967 500 triple (1). In between is Agostini's 1972 750/4 Imola 200 bike.



1974 DUCATI 750 SS

The fabled 1974 Ducati 750 SS, also known as the Greenframe. It was the first production motorcycle to use triple disc brakes and come equipped with a half fairing. It was also the first Ducati twin cylinder road bike to use Desmo valve operation. The going rate for a good example - well over $100,000. 65hp @ 8,500rpm. Top speed 220kph.



Produced between 1976-78 the Moto Guzzi 850 Le Mans is commonly referred to as the Mark I. Produced in two batches, this is a Series 2 model with the rectangular tail light design. 71hp @ 7,300rpm. Top speed 200kph. Also pictured here, the Benelli Sei was a development of the 1974 750 six. Less than 2000 of the 900cc version were produced. 80hp @ 8,400rpm. Top speed 210kph.



DUCATI MIKE HAILWOOD REPLICA

The penultimate version of Ducati's Mike Hailwood Replica was the 1983-4 model. The venerable 864cc motor received many updates (but not as many as the following 973cc Mille model) while the frame was now based on the S2 model rather than the SS. 72hp @ 7,000rpm. Top speed 222kph.

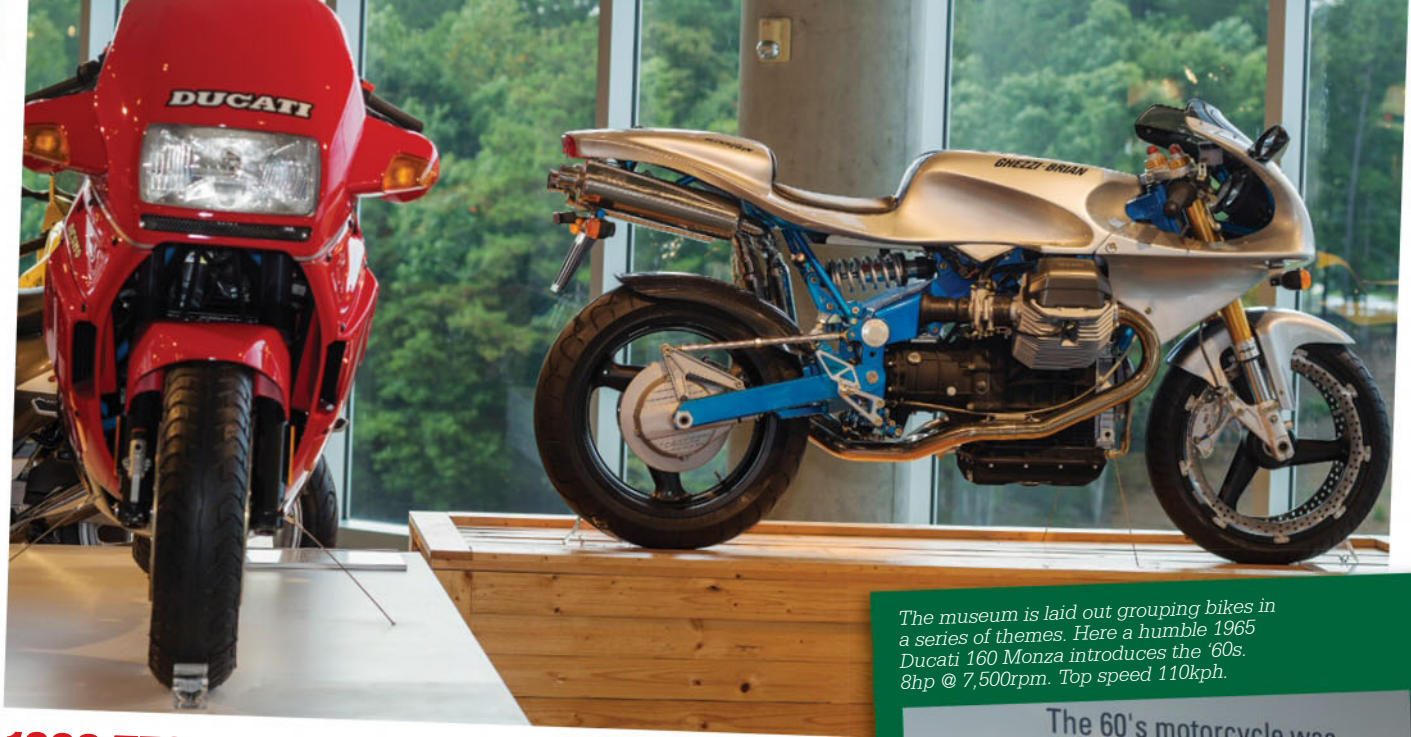


DUCATI 250 MK 3

The 5-speed Ducati 250 Mk 3 made a big impression in the US. Intended only as a stop gap model for 1965 (between the 4-speed Diana and the Mach 1), it ended up being on sale until 1969. It could be ordered with either the high bars seen here or clip-ons. This is a '66 model. 30hp @ 8,000rpm. Top speed 177kph.

A very varied bunch! L to R: 1970 Linto 500GP. 68hp @ 11,000rpm. Top speed 230kph. 2007 Ducati 1100 Hypermotard. 95hp @ 7,750rpm. 1957 Motobi Catria Lusso 175. 8.5hp @ 6,800rpm. Top speed 120kph. 1961 Maserati 50/T2 SS. Built by the Maserati Battery and Spark Plug Company (not the car company) this 50cc 2-stroke made 3hp @ 6,700rpm. Top speed 70kph.





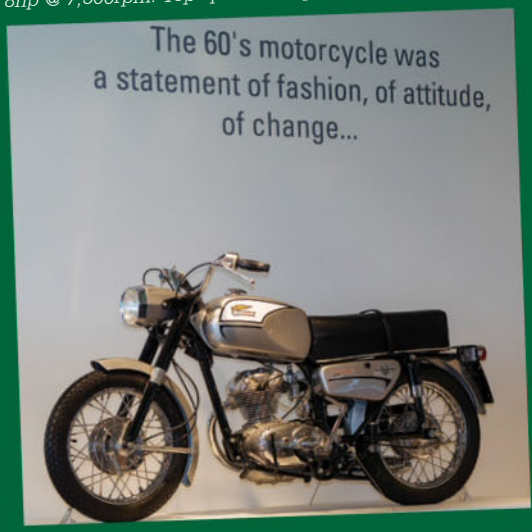
1986 750 PASO

The 1986 750 Paso was the first all-new model to come from Ducati after the Cagiva take-over in 1985. With fully enclosed bodywork and automotive-style Weber carburetor by designer Massimo Tamburini, it was a radical departure from previous Ducatis. Named after the great Italian racer Renzo Pasolini, the 750 was produced until 1988, after which the 906 (and later, 907) model took over. 72hp @ 8,000rpm. Top speed 210kph.

2002 GHEZZI & BRIAN SUPER TWIN 1100

Italians Giuseppe Ghezzi & Bruno Saturno operate a company dedicated to modifying Moto Guzzis. One of their bikes won the 1996 Italian SuperTwin championship and the road going 1100 was produced in limited numbers as a result of the subsequent demand. It is over 45kg lighter than the stock equivalent. 94hp @ 8,000rpm. Top speed 240kph.

The museum is laid out grouping bikes in a series of themes. Here a humble 1965 Ducati 160 Monza introduces the '60s. 8hp @ 7,500rpm. Top speed 110kph.





1979 LAVERDA 1200 30TH ANNIVERSARY

One of the rarest Laverda models produced, this 1979 1200 30th Anniversary came with a personalised letter from Massimo Laverda. It was the first Laverda fitted with a hydraulic clutch and used some Jota engine parts. The black & gold colour scheme extended to the steering nut being plated in real gold. While Laverda proposed to build 200 only 29 were actually offered for sale, with 10 coming to Australia (4 were sent on to NZ). The rest of the production went to the Libyian Police Force! 85hp @ 7,500rpm. Top speed 225kph.



This particular 1993 Moto Guzzi Daytona was repainted by the American importers and shipped back to the factory for evaluation. Their 'suggestions' were not taken up.



One of the most desirable Ducatis ever produced is the Supermono. This full on race bike was built in two versions, the 1993/4 550cc (seen here) and the 1995 572cc, for a total of 67 bikes. 78hp @ 10,500rpm. Top speed 240kph.

Ducati built three editions of the 916 Senna, in 1995, 97 & 98. This the '97 Senna II. Total production was 1000 units. 109hp @ 9,000rpm.



1956 250CC CORSA

While Parillas are best known for their 'high cam' models, the very first bike built by Giovanni Parrilla (with two r's) in 1946 was a DOHC design. He continued to produce a small range of OHC models and the very rare DOHC Corsa race bikes. This 1956 250cc Corsa incorporates magnesium engine cases and brakes. 26hp @ 7,200rpm. Top speed 177kph.



Based on the 166cc Arno GT, the 1971 250 B twin was an especially clean design with no external oil lines. 19hp @ 7,800rpm. Top speed 130kph.



Agostini's 1972 750/4 Imola 200 bike. It was later modified by the factory to chain final drive and fitted with twin front discs. 85hp @ 9,000rpm. Top speed 257kph.



MOTO MORINI 350

The final version of the Moto Morini 350 before the company came under Caviga's control in 1987 was the K2 of 1986. While the basics remained the same as the 1973 original, the styling & bodywork was very 'Japanese'. 35hp @ 8,000rpm. Top speed 160kph.

254 QUATTRO

Despite appearances, not a scaled down version of Benelli's 500/4 (which was very much a Honda copy), the 254 Quattro (and its Moto Guzzi twin) remains the world's only four cylinder quarter-litre road bike. Designed by Lino Toni in 1975 the actual capacity was 231cc which gave 28hp @ 10,500rpm. This is a 1981 model. Production ceased in 1986.

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BIKE TEST
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MONSTER TOUR









With a wide range of touring accessories available, getting out of town on a Ducati Monster in comfort is now a reality...

Feature by Miles Rangeley

The performance produced from that Testastretta 11° engine has always made the Monster 1200 a salivating motorcycle to ride, even better now after the change to liquid-cooled compared to the air-cooled 1100 Evo. Although one of its major downsides has always been the lack of touring accessories, meaning anything than a day trip was usually out of the question. Until now of course with the latest incarnation, the Monster 1200 Tourer, a more than capable long-mile motorcycle.

Of course it's still a Monster at heart, and if you've ridden one before, you would definitely agree when I say its agility and handling responsiveness is slick and instant, partly due to its longer wheelbase and those 10-spoke lightweight aluminium alloy wheels wearing Pirelli Diablo Rosso II tyres. The frame is something else Ducati have mastered, especially with the feel you get through the tight corners and sweeping bends. On closer inspection, it becomes clear it's a racing derived frame structure in that it uses the engine as a stressed element. The tubular steel front frame section, rear subframe and cantilever rear shock all bolt to the powerplant, with the single-sided swing-arm pivoting directly in the crankcase. Not only is the torsional stiffness almost twice that of the trellis frame previously used, it also plays a major role in reducing the weight on the Monster drastically to only 209kg. Less weight, more power…just what you want in a motorcycle like this!

Talking about power, the 1200 has got more grunt than a wild pig, and this power is delivered in abundance through the entire rev-range, with 85% of its total capacity being produced in the blink of an eye at a mere 4,500rpm. The Dual Spark (DS) ignition which uses two plugs per cylinder, thus ensuring complete combustion in the shortest possible time, is another feature adding to the performance stakes while fresh air is in abundance thanks to the secondary air system similar to that of the 1199 Panigale. So rest assured you need to keep your wits about you if you plan to tear it up from the lights on full power mode.









I do have to say the slipper clutch might not sound like the old dry clutches of the past that Ducatis were renowned for, but it's more than welcomed if you find yourself caught in peak-hour traffic. I remember the old days when you needed to have hands stronger than a gorilla just to continuously work the clutch, so I think losing that distinct sound is a small price to pay. Another great feature on the Monster 1200 is the adjustable seat, which can now be lowered from its standard height of 810mm to 785mm. It may not sound like a dramatic change, but it really does make a noticeable difference, opening up the door for those a little smaller who in the past might have found the original height as a deterrent.

The new one-piece handlebar which is 40mm higher and about 35mm further rearward offers a more upright riding position than on previous models, although you do still get that feeling of being positioned over the 43mm front forks with the sight of the front wheel clearly visible, which is something I've always enjoyed when riding the Monsters. You'll also notice the new instrument panel, directly inspired by the state of the art panel found on the 1199 Panigale. Adapting to variations in light, as well as a changing layout according to the selected Riding Mode, it's a much better set up than before. In Urban mode, only the most essential information is displayed as opposed to Touring mode which offers more information like fuel consumption etc, while Sport mode has the option of track lap times and other functions like the rpm digital bar graph.

But as mentioned before, it's the extra touring accessories that will surely make an impact for Monster enthusiasts, which includes a soft tank bag featuring numerous functional compartments, perfect for anything you might usually carry in your pockets. It even has a zip extension if you plan to pack a small bag in there as well. The semi-rigid side panniers are more than handy and also feature an extra zip

LESS WEIGHT, MORE POWER... JUST WHAT YOU WANT IN A MOTORCYCLE LIKE THIS!



The Monster 1200 'S' packs a little more punch than the standard model...

for making them a little wider if you find yourself needing to pack them to the brim. They're well designed too, keeping with the lines of the bike which was obviously something they set out to achieve the first time they put pencil to paper. Last but definitely not least is the little windscreen which fits snugly over the dash, and contrary to what you might think due to its size, it makes a big difference deflecting the wind on those longer trips.

Further to the touring accessories, there are other options available including the Sport Pack, which features an adhesive carbon tank protector, front and rear LED turn indicators, a homologated under-seat number plate holder, carbon VH heat guard for manifolds and a carbon ignition switch cover. The final option is the Urban Pack, which has an anti-theft security system, tank pocket bag and a black aluminium mirror kit. So as you can see, making a few changes to your standard Monster 1200 is as easy as sorting out a pack that suits you best. Of course there are more accessories available, but the kits definitely make it much easier to transform your Monster quickly.

Of course like always, brakes and suspension are top of the line components that we've come to expect from Ducati. To haul you up in a hurry the Brembo Monobloc M4-32 calipers at the front deliver a great feel through the lever with the 4-piston twin radially-mounted calipers gripping two 320mm rotors while the single 240mm disc at the rear is gripped by the Brembo twin piston caliper.

The entire new range of Monsters now also include the Ducati Safety Pack (DSP) which features the 9MP ABS system along with the 8-level Ducati Traction Control (DTC). I'm sure most riders today would agree that a motorcycle, no matter what its size or weight, should at least be fitted with an ABS system. To quote Kevin Magee, 'It only has to save your arse once to be worth it!"

It's clear the new touring accessories available for the 1200 Monster have definitely transformed what was a hot-rod motorcycle good for short trips into a functional tourer, all achieved with minimal changes. Basically, you can now enjoy the best of both worlds on your Monster 1200…









MONSTER 1200S

For those that might be looking for even more power, the performance package on the 'S' model raises the output to 145hp all managed by a Superbike-spec brake system and comes with multi-adjustable Ohlins suspension at the front and rear, instead of Kayaba forks and a Sachs shock on the standard model. Both get Brembo Monobloc front calipers with ABS, but the 'S' has Panigale type M50 calipers along with 330mm discs, instead of M4.32 calipers and 320mm rotors.

Something else you'll notice differentiating the 'S' model to the Standard model are the gloss black Y-pattern 3-spoke designed wheels, all constructed from lightweight aluminium and the carbon-fibre front guard.

In comparison, the standard 1200cc motor delivers 99.3kW (135CV) of power @ 8.750rpm and 118Nm of torque (12.Okgm) @ 7.250rpm, while the Monster 1200 'S' features a dedicated Ride by Wire mapping system allowing 106kW (145hp) of power @ 8.750rpm and 124.5Nm (91.8lb-ft) of torque @ 7.250rpm. Either way, both the Monster 1200 and the 1200 'S' are great motorcycles, although personally, I'd probably go for the 'S' model with the touring accessories fitted, but that's just me. ■









DUCATI MONSTER 1200 [1200S]

ENGINE TYPE
LIQUID-COOLED 90-DEGREE V-TWIN
VALVE ARRANGEMENT
DOHC, EIGHT VALVES
DISPLACEMENT
1198cc
BORE X STROKE
106 x 67.9mm
COMPRESSION RATIO
12.5:1
CARBURATION
MITSUBISHI INJECTION SYSTEM, MIKUNI THROTTLE BODIES
MAXIMUM POWER
135bhp [145bhp] @ 8750rpm
MAXIMUM TORQUE
118N.m [125Nm] @ 7250rpm
CLUTCH
WET MULTIPLATE SLIPPER
TRANSMISSION
6-SPEED
FRONT SUSPENSION
43MM INVERTED TELESCOPIC KAYABA [48MM ÖHLINS], 130MM TRAVEL, ADJUSTMENTS FOR PRELOAD, COMPRESSION AND REBOUND DAMPING
REAR SUSPENSION
ONE SACHS DAMPER, 152MM WHEEL TRAVEL, ADJUSTMENTS FOR PRELOAD AND REBOUND DAMPING [ÖHLINS DAMPER, ADJUSTMENTS FOR PRELOAD, COMPRESSION AND REBOUND DAMPING]
FRONT BRAKE
2, FOUR-PISTON BREMBO RADIAL MONOBLOC CALIPERS, 320MM [330MM] DISCS WITH ABS
REAR BRAKES
TWIN-PISTON BREMBO CALIPER, 245MM DISC WITH ABS
FRONT WHEEL
3.50 X 17IN; CAST ALUMINIUM
REAR WHEEL
6.00 X 17IN; CAST ALUMINIUM
FRONT TYRE
120/70 X 17IN PIRELLI DIABLO ROSSO II
REAR TYRE
190/55 X 17IN PIRELLI DIABLO ROSSO II
RAKE/TRAIL
24.3 DEGREES/93.2MM
WHEELBASE
1511mm
SEAT HEIGHT
785-810mm
FUEL CAPACITY
17.5 litres
WEIGHT
209kg wet (tank 90 per cent full); 182kg dry



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DOWNUNDER TO DAYTONA

Ever thought about visiting the US for Daytona Bike Week? Well why not make it special and attend the 75th Anniversary?







Along with Sturgis, Daytona Bike Week would have to be one of the most famous motorcycle events in the world, and with the 75th Anniversary in 2016, it's shaping up to be one of the biggest celebrations on the planet. That's right, it has been three quarters of a century since those pioneers first raced on Daytona Beach, which would eventually move to the Daytona Speedway to become the Daytona 200, one of the most sought after prizes in motorcycle racing. Some of the names who have raced on this hallowed turf over those 75 years are synonymous with motorcycle racing, and over time has created some mighty legends.

And with a brilliant tour organised by Elite SET, why not immerse yourself in some of US culture before you even arrive at Daytona with one of the best routes organised which will see you visit some of the most famous parts of America. Memorable places like the Jack Daniels Distillery in Tennessee, Sun Studio and Graceland in Memphis, New Orleans, and even NASA at Cape Canaveral.

I actually attended the very first Daytona Tour back in 2008 with Elite SET, so I can only imagine its got better, especially with having run it now for nearly ten years.

Not only is everything organised well in advance before you leave, the route will see you get off the main highways and onto interesting backroads, something I can lay testament to. And the support van, which is with you the entire ride, becomes your shuttle bus at night. Safety is paramount too, with Satellite Phones, experienced Ride Leaders and an intimate knowledge of the roads.

Once in Daytona, Bike Week is one of the most amazing spectacles you could imagine. From one end of the town to the other, thousands and thousands of motorcycles along with live music, shows, displays, exhibitions… there really is no way you can see everything.

So if this sounds like something you could see yourself enjoying, why not get in contact with Elite SET and see what they've got to offer with various options available. And while you're at it, why not check out the Isle of Man tour next year as well, which is just as good…

For more information you can either call Elite SET on 1300 884 891 and have them send out a brochure, or log on to; www.eliteset.com.au for details on all tours available. ■

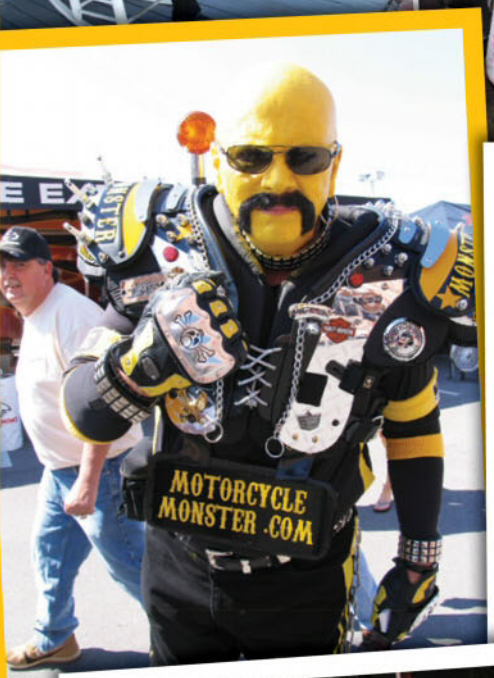







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HEAVYWEIGHT HAULER

If riding long hours and exploring the country in style sounds like you, maybe it's a Street Glide Special you need!

Feature by Miles Rangeley

If there is one thing most people would usually say about Harley-Davidson is that they build a big bike. The sheer physical size of their touring motorcycles is something to behold and is instantly felt when first lifting them off the side stand. It's evident that compared to other touring motorcycles, some of them are definitely the largest and heaviest on the market, but strangely enough though, once the wheels are turning you no longer have the feeling of all that extra weight and it doesn't take long to become more accustom to their size.

Harley's big tourers underwent some major changes over the past 10 years with updates in the frames, engines, brakes, lighting and their streamlining. Although without a doubt the most prominent and successful changes to the range was the recent overhaul aptly named Project Rushmore, released in August 2014, which involved Harley-Davidson gathering rider input worldwide in order to give the customer what they wanted. Nonetheless

a huge undertaking, but one that seemed to reap rewards. Through this feedback from their riders or prospective riders, it led to tests never performed in the past, which predominately involved the physics of cheating the wind. To achieve this many experiments were carried out in fluid mechanics, algorithms and high-speed super tests, not to mention the thousands of wind-tunnel tests. The result was the classic Harley-Davidson Batwing fairing, but with a difference as it now produces less head buffeting by delivering a smoother air flow thanks to the air intake on the front. The intake not only directs air up behind the screen but flows it over the screen as well, creating a stable air pocket behind the fairing for the rider.

The Street Glide Special also handles better than previous models with upgraded suspension thanks to an increase in fork size from 41mm to 49mm and a rear suspension upgrade with the spring over shocks now easily adjusted by hand once you remove the pannier. The front and rear wheels are fitted with Dunlop Multi-Tread tyres and features a wider 180/65-16 rear accompanied with a 130/60-19 at the front. The new tyres are said to last at least half as long again as the previous tyre, so you should get great durability, which is paramount on a heavy bike like the Street Glide.

Something else a heavy bike requires is excellent brakes, and in addition to now fitting Brembo four spot brakes to both legs on the Street Glide Special, H-D have also upgraded their braking systems to what they refer to as their Reflex Linked Brake system, which also includes ABS. With the Reflex Linked Brake system, the front and rear brakes are electronically linked to provide exactly the right amount of pressure to each tyre simultaneously, no matter what the road condition is while the ABS ensures the wheels won't lock up giving you greater control. And we all know if you're a serious touring rider, you don't just ride during the day, which is why they've also improved the lighting on the Street Glide Special using a new headlight that, while not being an LED, certainly is a huge improvement over the older models. The dual halogen headlight punches out 986 lumens, so you should have very few problems seeing the road ahead of you.

Something Harley-Davidsons have never been known for is high horsepower and this 103ci engine certainly isn't up there in those stakes either, as most of the figures quoted on stock bikes are around 65-68hp. However H-D have got a bucket load of torque being produced from this engine and gearbox configuration which gives the Street Glide Special plenty of usable power where you need it, which on a touring bike is mostly in the mid-range. The touring 103ci engine also differs from those in the other twin cam models as the cams are different providing more punch out of corners or when overtaking.









The Street Glide Special also gets an upgrade from the Street Glide Standard which is available in the USA, and that's the up-spec BOOM! 6.5 touch screen infotainment unit which pumps out 25 watts per channel. It offers great sound plus the 6.5 version offers satellite navigation, Bluetooth connectivity, colour screen selection and many more features.

Now as mentioned previously, bikes like this can be daunting and feel too heavy to ride, but the mass centralisation of weight allows the bike to be much more controllable and for such a big machine it handles beautifully. This kilometre killer will see you travel for hours on end without the slightest hint of being uncomfortable too. The seat is big and well padded, the footboards offer a variety of riding positions and behind that screen you can't feel any buffeting at all.

On this big girl you could easily take on the single day Brisbane-Sydney ride, although around town it's just as functional. While it may seem too large for the daily grind of traffic if you live in one of the major cities, surprisingly it can be lane filtered with ease as with the long wheel base it is quite stable. And with the bike being the size it is you'll find it has a road presence that is only enhanced by a set of free flowing mufflers and air filter once your first service is over.

The panniers offer good luggage capacity for a weekend away with your favourite significant other or a week or more on the road by yourself. And of course Harley-Davidson also have a wide range of accessories that can easily be attached, especially in their Quick Detachable range, which means being easily removed you can transform the bike in a matter of seconds. Harley's switchgear will take some getting used to with the indicator buttons on each side, however once you are more familiar with the system it works quite well. Another good feature is the stereo volume which rises automatically as you increase speed and vice-versa.

At $34,995 ride away it might be a little more expensive compared to other tourers on the market, but Harley-Davidsons do tend to hold their value quite well, and for a bike that's just as comfortable on the open road as it is around town, the Street Glide Special seems to be worth its value. ■

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TWO WHEELS SHED

CONTROLLED CRUISING

Feature by PAX

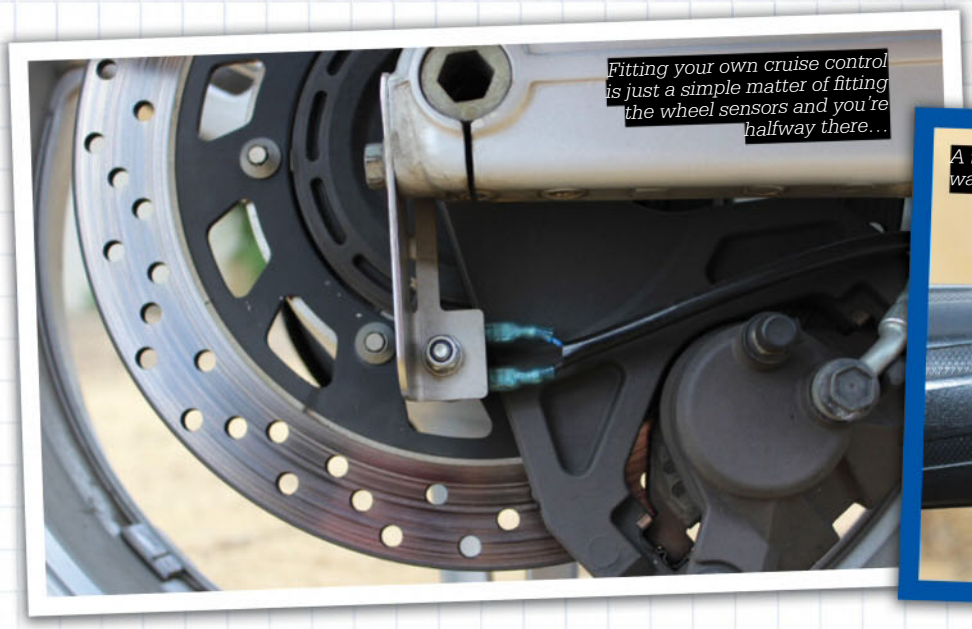
If you're like me and ride long distances, here are a few handy tips to make it even more enjoyable...

I recently ferried a bike interstate for a mate. A big Yammie with all the fruit plus cruise control. It was a nice bike to ride the long and straight roads home, but the cruise control was a nice touch out near Mildura. I've got the excuse of a wrist that has been butchered by a well meaning surgeon, so on long rides I use a basic throttle lock to give the wrist a rest for a moment or so. Like a lot of blokes my age, there's a list of various aches and pains to endure on a big ride, so I thought I'd go through some of the ways to ease these, and for you younger whipper snappers, there may be an idea on how to make a thousand kays a day a lot easier.

The wind is the key, as wind blast or helmet turbulence from a poor fairing or screen is a big fatigue factor. A small flyscreen on a naked bike can double the length of a day's ride and a larger or lipped touring screen on a faired bike can mean a sea of calm to ride in. Mocked by many, for years I rode a Sportster



Another example of a simple throttle lock to make life easier



Fitting your own cruise control is just a simple matter of fitting the wheel sensors and you're halfway there...



A throttle lock is always a simple way to give your wrist a break

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Most modern motorcycles are now fitted with electronic cruise control


The old sheepskin on the seat is still one of the comfortable options available

with a bloody great windshield from a touring Harley. It looked odd but I was doing 800km one way journeys most weekends, so I didn't give a rats. Once the pressure is off your chest the arms and neck can work easier and longer before needing a rest, important if you plan big days.

Something else to consider is that your bum is going to cop it after the first few hundred kays or so, regardless of what bike you are riding if you have the standard seat. I have tried all the different methods and designs to reduce bum fatigue, from gel packs, air cushions, custom seats and whilst they all have benefits, the best is still the humble sheepskin cover. Yes it will get wet when it rains, but then so will you. A skin in combination with any of the others will mean that the inevitable numb (and then not so) bum is delayed by a few hundred kays, but the upshot is that it will reduce the severity like no other product.

Highway pegs are aptly named. Bikes have a problem in that we get locked into position. Stretching out the legs is a time honoured practice, having somewhere to rest them for a while is better. Unfortunately there are not a lot of choices for a lot of bikes to either fit them, or to locate them somewhere that doesn't put adverse pressure on your hips. If they are an option on a new machine I'd heartily suggest you do so, or retrofitting them if possible. For those of us short of leg the problem is even more pronounced. Good luck short arse.

Heated grips are rapidly becoming a factory option, and of the aftermarket units available Oxford is perhaps the best known brand. Keeping those digits warm means foul weather or frosty mornings just became far easier to endure. The benefits are not just isolated to the hands, as the warmth stops heat being leached from your body and leads to greater endurance. My last winter ride saw a string of -5 degree mornings for over a week, so being able to put in the first couple of hours with toasty digits meant I covered a lot more distance with nary a second look at coffee shops along the way.

Which leads me back to throttle locks. They have been around since just about day one, and can range from something as basic as a screw in friction clamp, to the fully automated cruise control. These


Highway pegs are another great option for a little extra comfort

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Here's what is called a 'Cramp Buster' which allows the palm to be used eliminating the painful death grip on long trips


A touring screen is one of the best ways to cut down wind buffeting

days top end touring machinery has electronic cruise control as a standard feature or at least an option from the factory. Retrofitting a cruise control unit is not as difficult as it seems. They've been available for years from auto supply shops and can be re-jigged for bike use with just a little work. As long as you can fit a sensor to a wheel and have enough room under the seat for the control unit you are halfway there.

For anyone who has used some sort of throttle control there is usually a simple lesson. Too tight aint right. The temptation is there to set them up so they lock the throttle tube to a point where the revs will not drop whilst you continue. The error is self evident when you wish to roll off the throttle in hurry, such as wildlife encounters or the sight of a distant candy car. This results in a quandary; Why fit one if it is only going to give you momentary relief? Normally you only need to give the wrist a flex or un-cramp the fingers for a sec and you will be right for quite some time. Where electronic cruise control is set up to be throttle and brake sensitive, friction locks need to be overridden easily, whether it's a flick of the thumb or the unit disengages when the tube is rolled off.

The simplest throttle lock I've seen was a length of 10 gauge electrical wire wrapped around the tube and twisted into a short length that was pushed up by the thumb to wedge the inside of the rubber grip against the switch block. Rolling off the throttle disengaged it. Simply brilliant.

Obviously these are just a few ideas that I've encountered over my years of riding long distances. If you do something similar, why not be comfortable the entire time? Just a little food for thought… **2W**


Even an Oggy Knob can provide a place to rest your foot

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They were definitely a popular motorcycle when first released

TWO STROKE MEMORIES

There was nothing like the sound and smell of a two-stroke motorcycle

Feature by Peter Cox

TOO-right it's high tech! Mono shock rear end, liquid-cooled, high power output and, allegedly, ready to touch the ton. But it's 'just' a 250 learner bike!

You'd have to agree that the Australian 250cc law for learners, now thankfully consigned to history, could put some wild machines in the hands of learners holding sufficient dollars. But few were as wild as the hot two-strokes.

Yamaha's RD250LC was astonishing when it arrived and really deserved the 'TZ-derived' moniker attached to it. All manufacturers, of course, like us to think that their sport bikes are race-derived, but back in 1981 it was hard to get closer to GP spec than an RD-LC two stroke.

A sensible person would buy the 350 with its dual front disks and, comparatively, lusty torque. But learners could only get a 250 and, once licenced, Australians of the 1980s were more likely to jump to a 750 or a litre class bike if they could afford it.

So plenty of RD250LC bikes took to the street and got a somewhat savage reputation for ending up in the wreckers in short order due to the over-confidence of their young riders. A couple of years later the RGV, TZR and KR two-strokes brought better frames, tyres and brakes but, I'd guess, just as many trips to the wreckers. But they are a different story…

Now that we are 30 years down the track from the launch of the liquid-cooled RD you'd think that they would be unobtainable. They'd be wreckers, they'd have blown up, they'd be under-braked, under-tyred and unattractive to own. But, while I can't say that they are easy to find, a walk around any event welcoming Japanese classics will find some beautiful examples still running hard.

The 2014 Barry Sheene Festival of Speed was just such an event. There were beautifully restored road rides, hard-working race bikes with cheap matt black resprays to get them on the track and immaculate racers with gorgeous expansion chambers and race fairings.

Funny thing though, there seems to be an age limit on appreciation. A great feature of the Barry Sheene Festival of Speed is the





Take a look at the Kenny Roberts RD250LC replica!



An example of an early model air cooled RD250, the predecessor to the LC





A 1980 model Yamaha RD250LC

lunch break spectator parade laps. And when I say 'parade' I don't mean walking pace. It's suitably restrained and very well managed but there are opportunities to exercise your engine, suspension and brakes over a couple of laps of the track.

After my two laps on the R100 (150kmh down the straight, might have managed the ton with one more lap) I was waiting in the food queue and heard a young fella (under 30) complaining about 'parading' behind a two-stroke. "It stank and smoked," he said. "And I think there is oil on my visor!"

Strewth! The aroma of two-stroke mix is a heady perfume for men and women of a certain age. For anyone over, say, 45 it's likely that your first couple of bikes - road or trail - were fragrant two-strokes of smallish capacity. The noise and smell spark memories of clear skies, sunny days and blue smoke trails. Mind you, I have regretted being at the back of a pack of smoking Lambrettas and Vespa classics. They didn't just smoke, some of them were throwing lumps and dripping.

A good RD250LC wouldn't be doing that, of course. Compared with earlier piston port, air-cooled two-strokes, the RD250LC has the very best of lean, efficient engine management.

Reed valves better control fuel/oil flow, liquid cooling tightens tolerances and makes for more consistent running. And, while not extreme, there is a little bulging through the exhausts on the RD250LC to provide some expansion chamber effect.

A well-tuned RD250LC with the right settings on the auto mixer (two stroke oil goes in a small tank under the seat, straight petrol in the fuel tank) will smoke for a while after start-up when it's running rich on the choke. Once it's warm and the choke is off, the haze should die down, leaving only the scent behind.

Compared with new 250 and 300 class machines the RD250LC has a huge fuel tank, accommodating 17 litres. But, of course, fuel economy on a bike like this, ridden as intended, will be pretty ordinary. Ride tests I've seen on the interweb quote around 40 miles to the gallon but don't say if that is going hard or going easy. That's around 17km to the litre. A modern four stroke is likely to get better than 25 to the litre around town and better on the highway at legalish speeds.

So what do you expect from your RD250LC once it is warmed up? Some of the numbers tell the story, with the bike weighing around 140kg dry. It's listed for 27.7kW at 8500rpm in most tests and 29.5Nm of torque at 8000rpm.

As a comparison, you'd need a 400cc four-stroke twin to beat those numbers in 1981. A Honda CB400N, at one time alleged to be quicker than an RD400 by Honda's PR spinners, weighed in at 177kg dry and put out 32kW of power and 33.3Nm of torque. The Honda would be more relaxing to ride, and have far better fuel economy, but that's rather missing the point of the RD250LC.

For modern comparisons, the 1981 RD250LC is 7kW more powerful than a modern Kawasaki Ninja 250, weighs 10kg less and has 7Nm more torque.

When the RD250LC goes, it goes. All the PR claims it is good for the ton and I haven't seen this disputed by many interweb tests of the time. With a six speed transmission, good gearing and a good straight I am confident it's not just marketing BS.



The Yamaha RD250LC



Not a bad example seen at the Barry Sheene Festival of Speed!



Many RD250s were used for racing

THE AROMA OF TWO-STROKE MIX IS A HEADY PERFUME FOR MEN AND WOMEN OF A CERTAIN AGE...



Never has the invaluable experience of success in worldclass competition been more dramatically expressed in road-going machines than in Yamaha's new two-strokes. The RD250 is a breakthrough in motorcycle design.

Based directly on Yamaha's TZ road racers, the RD features a liquid-cooled piston-ported two-stroke twin cylinder engine and the Yamaha monoshock system which has taken the TZ and YZR road racers to repeated world titles.

The RD has the slim, lean look of a racer. Yamaha's unique experience on the racetrack has led to the development of a motorcycle with broad, dependable safety margins. The motorcycle that wins races is not just the fastest motorcycle.

It is, inevitably, the best handling, best braking, most stable motorcycle under the most widely varying stresses. In short, a safe motorcycle.

(Engine and gearbox) The RD250 displaces 247 cc (bore and stroke 54.0 x 54.0 mm) and develops a maximum power of 35.5 Hp at 8500 rpm. Maximum torque is (3.1 kg-m) at 8000 rpm.

The engine is a liquid-cooled two-stroke twin equipped with a frontal radiator. Carburation is through twin Mikunis. Gearbox is six-speed, clutch wet multiplate; final drive by chain.

(Features) The exhaust is matt-black expansion chamber style, upswept for additional ground clearance. The wheels are new Yamaha Italic® design, cast from alloy and finished in silver and matt-black.

The brakes are single disc front and waterproof, dust-proof drum rear.

Instrumentation is comprehensive and includes sports tachometer and full range of warning lights. Self-cancelling indicators are fitted as standard.

The rear suspension is Yamaha's all-conquering Monoshock.

A triangulated rear sub-frame carries the steering head and the swingarm pivot. The system has long rear-wheel travel, but more positive damping, which allows the wheel to follow more closely and more safely the variations in road surface.

The front suspension is by long travel forks equipped with non-stick Teflon bushes.

YAMAHA'S RD250: THE NEW, LIQUID-COOLED, 2-STROKE. WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED HAS BEEN IMPROVED.

One of the original advertisements for the RD250LC!

The fun, and skill, of riding these bikes is doing it well enough to keep it cooking in the power band. But that's true of small capacity four-strokes as well, as anyone who's ridden a four-cylinder 250 can tell you. Fall out of the power band and there's nothing. When it's running cold and uneven there's nothing either. Also true of my son's brand new CB125e.

Helping maintain the cornering speed are some absolutely cracking frame and suspension components for the time. Like the TZ, the RD250LC sports a 'Monocross' rear suspension. It isn't rising rate, like the later designs, but the single shock and strong swingarm were something special on Japanese road burners of the time. The front forks were good, again for the time, although I have seen plenty of them fitted with fork braces later in their life.

One of the issues is the single front brake on the RD250LC which, if it could brake hard enough, might put a bit of twist through the forks. But plenty of people less committed to pure stock restorations have put the dual disk front end of the RD350LC on their RD250LC to get some better braking performance. After all, the RD250LC makes





do with a single piston front disk and a rear drum. Matched to an undrilled or grooved front disk it's one area of the bike most obviously behind modern bikes.

The other is the tyres. The RD250LC is fitted up with 18-inch mags front and rear. They were pretty light, for their day, and took tubeless tyres but they look mighty skinny to modern eyes. The front is a 90/90 and the rear a 110/80. Great sizes for pin sharp steering and rough roads but not so good for laying down rubber under heavy braking and acceleration.

Sad to say I didn't get to ride the early model RD250LC myself. I cut my teeth on a Suzuki 250 X7 before moving to four strokes and, by the time I started test riding, the RD had become the RZ and had grown another abbreviation - YPVS. This change, to introduce the power valve, is said to have smoothed out the power delivery of the original RD250LC and taken some of the harsh step out of the power band. The RZ's are easier to find and got easier and easier to live with but that process of buffing off the harsh edges also removes some of the fun and the challenge.

With all my touring miles and pillioning back in the 80's I could never have managed with a small capacity, high strung two-stroke. I really didn't miss my ornery little Suzuki when I moved to my CB400T and then CX500. But now that I can afford to keep a couple of machines, the smell and sound of the RDs at the Barry Sheene Festival of Speed has given me a hankering for something small and anti-social. ■



Ready to race at the Barry Sheene Festival of Speed



Rossi has achieved 200 podium finishes, with 110 of those being race victories...









NOT FADE AWAY

You could easily be swamped by Valentino Rossi's career statistics, including his incredibly impressive 200th career podium finishes. But he is still in there fighting for victories at age 36 and extraordinarily popular, from the teenage girls who wave yellow flags at the GPs to the young motorcyclists out and about the world over in Rossi-replica helmets and jackets...

"Every time I think Valentino Rossi is brilliant, he goes and does something even more brilliant!" That was current FIM Grand Prix race director Mike Webb's summary at Philip Island in October 2004, when Rossi beat Sete Gibernau by a bare 0.097 seconds to seal the world championship in his first season on a Yamaha.

Rossi could have continued to clock up premier-class championships with Honda. He'd already won three in succession. But he set himself the challenge to win with a make that in 2003 had failed to win a race.

Fast forward 11 seasons. Rossi is still in GP racing and maintaining 'alien' rider-level standards. It's his 20th season, equalling Australian private entrant Jack Findlay's span from 1958 to '78. Rossi is the oldest rider in the paddock. Jerez was his 200th career podium finish; 55 per cent of those have been race victories. Veteran scribes delight in the fact he "still rides like a 22-year-old!"

Rossi combines that riding verve with the finest strategic mind. Yamaha teammate Jorge Lorenzo says he is the best at developing a winning plan as the race progresses. Rossi's victory in Argentina, turning the best lap times of the race on the extra-hard rear tyre to hunt down Marc Marquez, showed both his racer nous and how he has kept himself at the cutting edge. He's been able to adapt to changing his crew chief after a dozen years working with Jeremy Burgess, machine developments, changing tyre characteristics, new riding styles and the challenge of a new superstar.

It's hard to decide whether we should be surprised or not that Rossi is still a force in his 37th year; riding better than he did in 2014. Some highly successful riders have seen their win ratios tail off dramatically in their 30s, but Rossi has not faded away. As Lorenzo said after the Argentina race, "Valentino's race was unbelievable. He was able to go faster than anyone else with the harder tyre; he is in an unbelievable shape."

Kevin Cameron, the doyen of motorcycle technical writers, observed many years ago that racing isn't so much about going fast as going exactly right. "A racer in his 30s can have definite advantages in discipline and self-control," he said.

Rossi's two-decade GP career reflects his absolute love for what he does and relatively few serious injuries. Moreover, the comfort level of modern GP racing is far above what Findlay and his contemporaries knew in the 1960s and 1970s. Rossi can do a race in Europe, staying in his motor home, be home the next day spending time with mates and go dirt-track training the day after that.

His move to Yamaha in 2004 was something of a leap of faith. Yamaha had not won a premier-class championship since 1992 and its MotoGP program was falling behind Honda.

Wayne Rainey, the 1990-91-92 500 champion, said at the time Rossi should expect to be 10km/h down at a lot of places and making up the difference was just 'part of the job'.

A much revised M1 was in the wings for '04, with the aim of winning the title in Yamaha's 50th anniversary year in



Rossi has always had the respect of his peers...



2005. Yamaha engineers didn't expect to win in '04. Rossi and his crew had other ideas. And then he won the first race in South Africa! Australian engineer Warren Willing saw Rossi beat arch-rival Max Biaggi (Honda) by 0.2s from the pit wall and likened it to riding the entire race in qualifying mode.

Sure, Rossi has had setbacks. Half a decade ago he was troubled by both a broken shoulder, sustained when he fell off a motocross bike, and breaking his leg at Mugello. Shoulders are hard to fix even with surgery and Rossi's took longer than the leg. Crucially, he has thus far dodged the arm pump problems that affected Kenny Roberts' later career and this year forced Dani Pedrosa to miss races.

One year Rossi arrived for pre-season testing in Sepang with a badly gashed foot, saying he lost his balance while closing the curtains at his home and put his foot through a glass-topped coffee table. Later, he sheepishly admitted to his crew it wasn't because of the drapes. What is it with racers or rock stars and coffee tables?

He also had the much-reported and ultimately costly stoush with the Italian tax department, which caught him out on his claim to be living in London. There have been what the press call 'girlfriend troubles' and of course the two winless years at Ducati. Rossi reckoned he knew within the first 30 minutes of his first Ducati test session that he'd made a huge mistake, but he managed to retain a positive disposition through 24 months, and has since answered those who wrote him off as a has been.

What keeps him going? Rossi says that he's in good shape and doesn't have any difficulty maintaining full physical and mental focus. "So at that point what makes the difference is the motivation," he said. "I love my life, also going around the world, Europe and especially working with Yamaha and my team. It is just this and the taste of victory is always special; something different. It is a pleasure to work to find that feeling."

For age comparisons, Rossi is now on the top-ten lists for both youngest and oldest premier-class winners. He sits at number eight on the youngest list, one day ahead of Casey Stoner. They recorded their respective maiden premier-class victories at 21 and 144/145 days.

On the oldest list, Rossi this year replaced 1950s superstar Geoff Duke at number ten. Further up that list we find three Australians.

Jack Findlay is at number two, being 42 when he won a controversial boycotted Austrian GP in a 1977. Jack Ahearn is number four, being 39 years and 327 days when he won an all-private entrant battle in Finland in 1964. And Troy Bayliss holds position eight, for winning as a stand-in rider at Valencia in 2006 aged 37 years and 213 days. Bayliss this year confirmed his ever-green status by riding two World Superbike rounds and then going dirt tracking in the USA.

Should Rossi win another MotoGP title, he would bump Phil Read as the second-oldest premier-class champion. His career has already stretched beyond those of multiple champions who managed to leave racing on their own terms, such as a Giacomo Agostini, Duke, Read and Eddie Lawson.

Putting it another way, think of some of the men Rossi has raced through 125, 250, 500 and three versions of MotoGP: Haruchika Aoki, Nobby Ueda, Loris Capirossi, Tetsuya Harada, Garry McCoy and Kenny Roberts Jnr (especially in his first 500 season in 2000), Alex Barros, Max Biaggi, Tohru Ukawa, Sete Gibernau, Nicky Hayden, Casey Stoner, Jorge Lorenzo, Dani Pedrosa and now Marc Marquez. He simply loves the battle…





GRAZIANO ROSSI

On July 22, 1979, a wild-looking Italian school teacher riding a works Morbidelli won the Swedish 250 GP at Karlskoga. It was Graziano Rossi's third victory from as many 250 GP starts, having previously won in Yugoslavia and The Netherlands and, like the other works riders, boycotted the Belgian GP.

The victories came against Kawasaki's super duo of Gregg Hansford and Kork Ballington, with Hansford second in all three races.

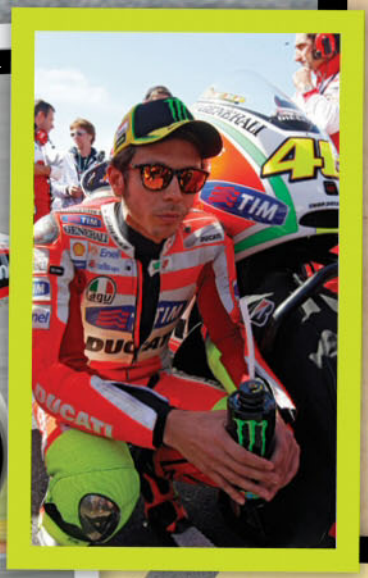
British mechanic Alistair Taylor as an impartial observer, working for another team, was quoted in Motocourse. "Well there we are, that's his third fluke in a row."

Rossi finished third in the 1979 250 championship to Ballington and Hansford. He rode Morbidelli's 500 V4 too. He later raced Suzuki and Yamaha 500s, and in 1982 was teammate to Graeme Crosby.

The point about 1979 is that on February 16, four months before Graziano's first GP victory, he and wife Stefania had a son named Valentino. At time of writing he'd won 110 GPs. Damn impressive and can anyone remember a fluke?



The switch to Ducati wasn't a memorable time for Rossi...







He always raced against some of the best!





VALE GEOFF DUKE, MARCH 29TH, 1923 – MAY 1ST 2015

If you want a template for the 1950s sports person, look no further than six-times world motorcycle champion Geoffrey Ernest Duke OBE, who has died in his adopted home of the Isle of Man, aged 92.

Born in St Helens, Lancashire, he served as a British Army Signals Corps dispatch rider and then competed in trials and scrambles, before enjoying virtually instant success as a road racer and winning the 1949 Senior (500) Clubmens TT.

Norton introduced the so-called Featherbed frame on its 1950s works machines and this proved a perfect match for Duke's immaculate style, his body always in line with the machine. And then he asked his tailor to make him slim-fit one-piece leathers...

Duke won the first premier-class world championship race he started, the 1950 Isle of Man 500 TT, and went within one point of claiming the championship. Tyre failures cost valuable points during the season. The following year he became the first double champion, claiming the 350 and 500 crowns for Norton and, by popular vote, being named Britain's Sportsman of the Year. He featured on photo cards handed out to fans.

Knowledgeable observers who saw Duke in his prime on a Norton reckon he was simply on another level. He was the only rider ever to win the 500 championship for the make.

Duke won the 350 title again in 1952, before switching to Gilera and winning consecutive 500 crowns in 1953-54-55. This confirmed his status as Post-War road racing's first superstar. In the summer of 1954-55 he brought a brace of works Gileras to Australia for a national racing tour.

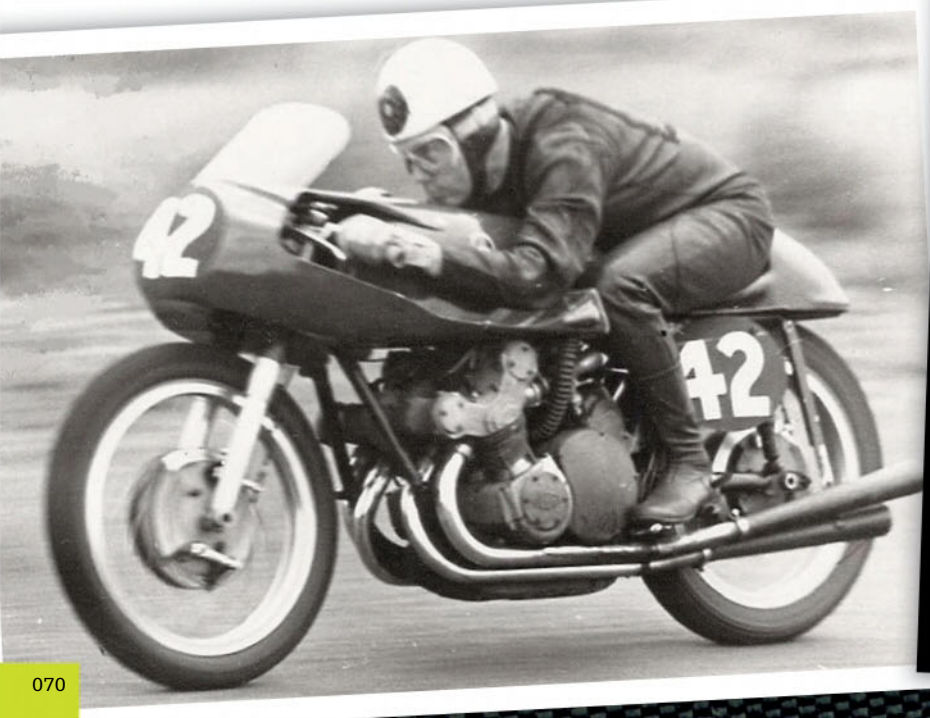
At the 1955 Isle of Man classic, Geoff Duke went within a whisker of the first 100mph lap. The timekeepers initially posted his speed at the margin ton, then amended it to 99.97mph.

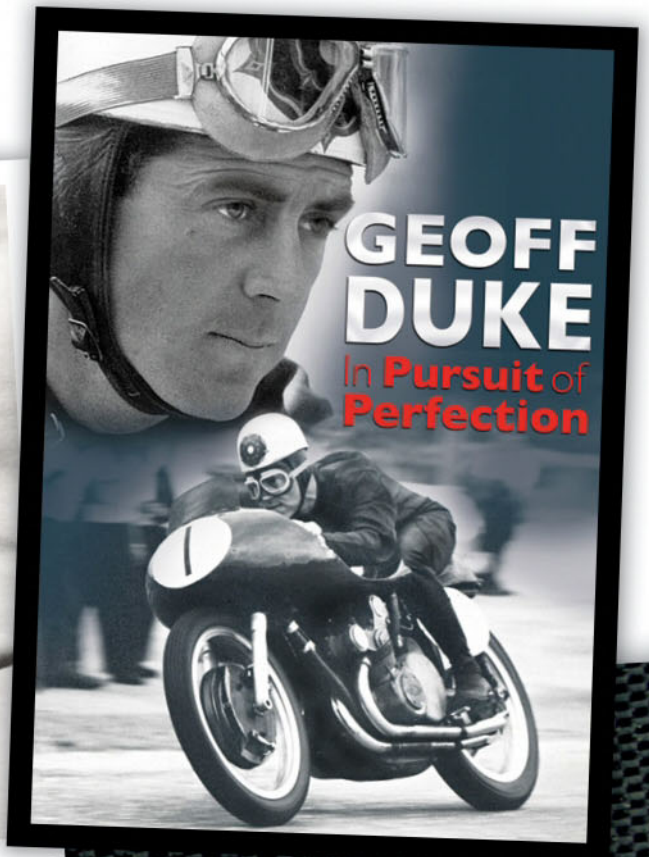
As a rider, Duke was smooth, brave and committed. If anything went wrong, he would be in the trees, walls or other trackside scenery of 1950s public road circuits. His off-machine presentation was immaculate too, with good looks and an authoritative speaking voice. He excelled in the 'school captain' side of being world champion – the after-dinner chat and speaking up for other riders. He was, simply, a gentleman.

At Assen in 1955, Duke stood by the private entrants in their start-money dispute with the race organisers, even though he was philosophically opposed to strikes. His principled stand cost dearly. He was suspended for six months, in a move calculated so he would miss the 1956 Isle of Man TT and Dutch TT, and have no chance of retaining the 500 championship. Injury in 1957 meant he missed the chance to shoot for the 100mph IoM lap with Gilera.

Nanou Lyonnard was a fixture in the paddock for three decades and remembers Geoff Duke as a gentleman who "always impressed me. He was a nice, courteous and refined man, and had a pragmatic, organised approach to circuits."

Duke's last world championship race victories were in Sweden in 1958 on private Nortons. He retired from racing in 1959, having won 22 500 GPs – the same number as Kenny Roberts and John Surtees. ■







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ON ANY SUNDAY

The stuff we do for fun





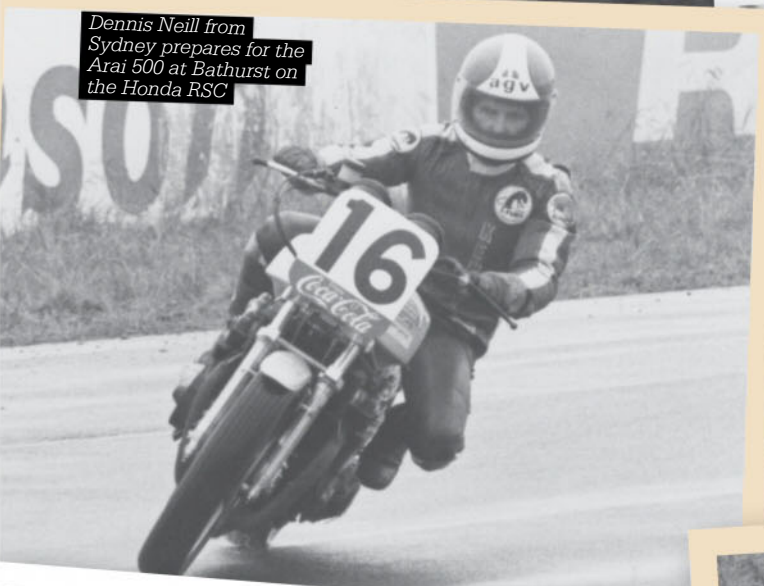


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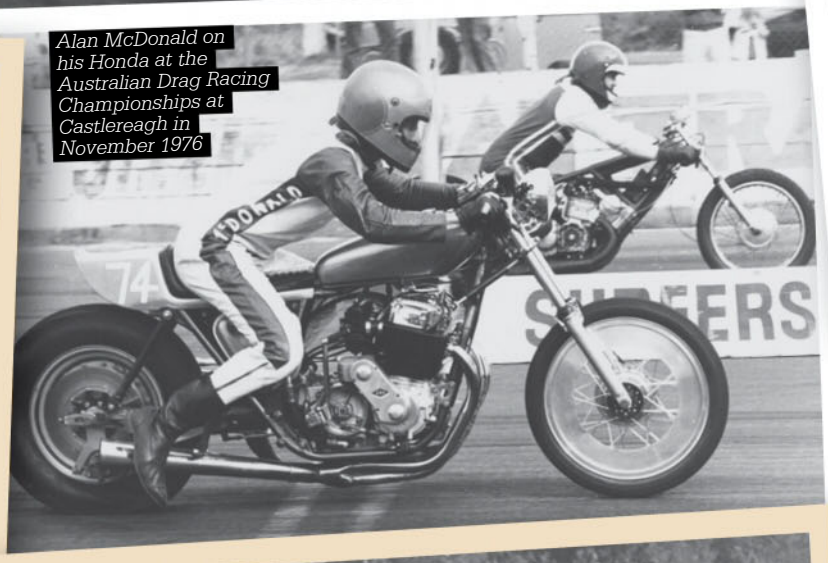
MEMORY LANE
PHOTOS FROM THE ARCHIVES



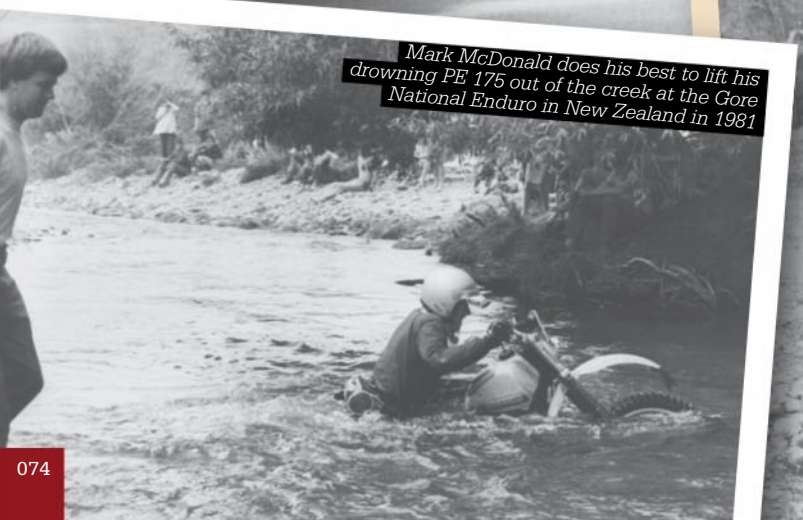
American Supercross Champion Mike Bell tearing it up in his bid to retain his world title!



Dennis Neill from Sydney prepares for the Arai 500 at Bathurst on the Honda RSC



Alan McDonald on his Honda at the Australian Drag Racing Championships at Castlereagh in November 1976



Mark McDonald does his best to lift his drowning PE 175 out of the creek at the Gore National Enduro in New Zealand in 1981



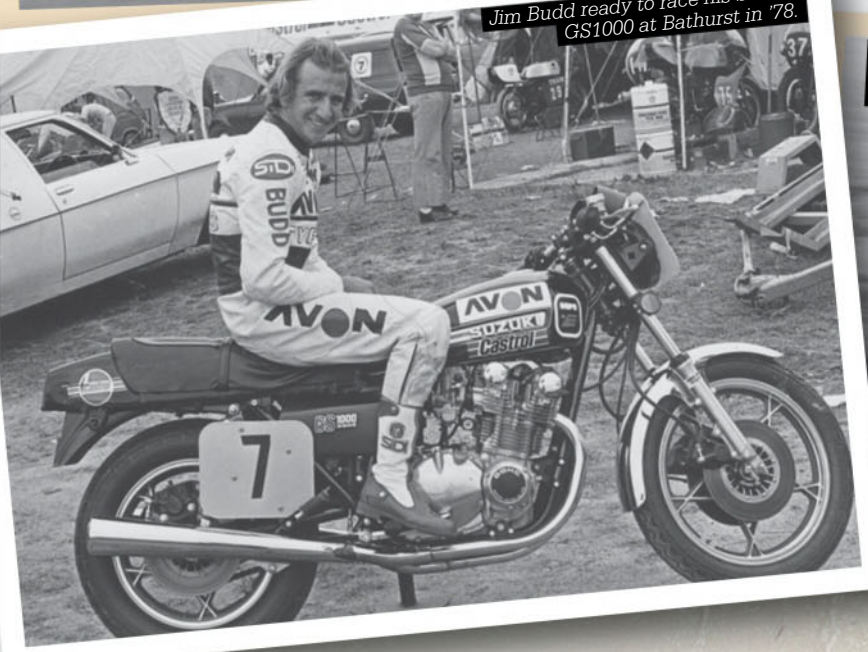
Here's something different – a Trials Sidecar – Ted McGan's Ariel.



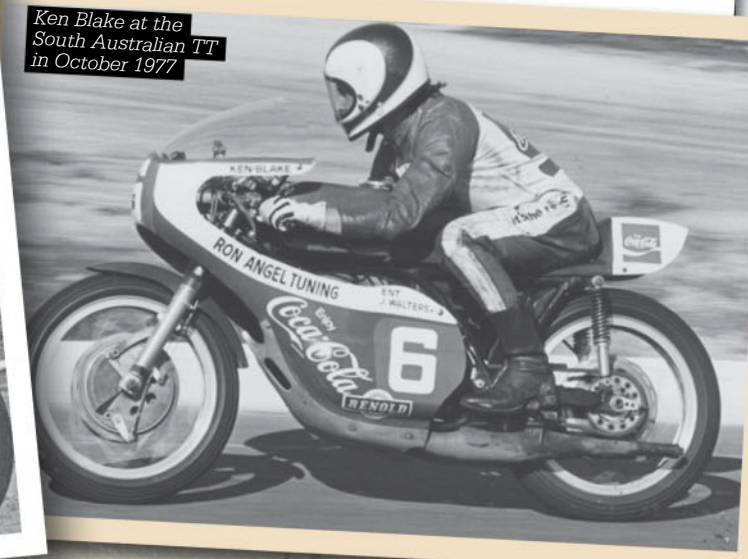
Greg McKee riding his ancient T2 250 Yamaha in the 1977/'78 Marlboro Series.



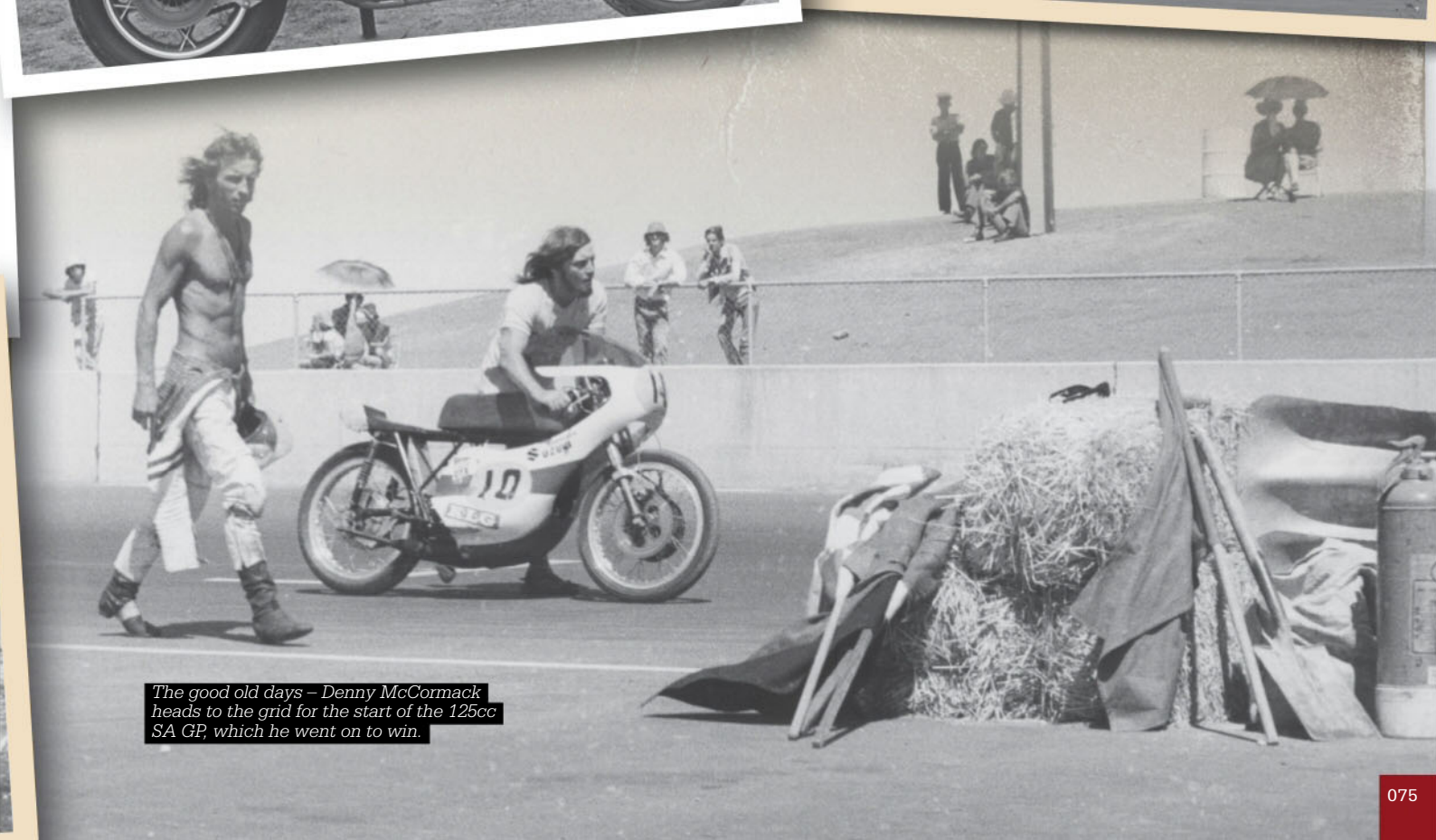
Warren Nolan on his 820 Suzuki battle Graham French on his 900 Kawasaki in the Superbike Series at Lakeside on February 12th 1978.



Jim Budd ready to race his Suzuki GS1000 at Bathurst in '78.



Ken Blake at the South Australian TT in October 1977



The good old days – Denny McCormack heads to the grid for the start of the 125cc SA GP, which he went on to win.

scooter test

URBAN MOBILITY

With a host of upgrades, the new Piaggio MP3 has come a long way since its inception almost ten years ago...

Feature by Roland Brown



Piaggio's claim that the MP3 has 'revolutionised urban mobility' might sound far-fetched but the Italians have a point. Since the first three-wheeler appeared in 2006, MP3s have become some of the best-selling scooters in many countries, and that success has triggered the development of patent-dodging challengers in Peugeot's Metropolis and Yamaha's recently launched Tricity.

The MP3's impact is particularly obvious amid the traffic-choked chaos of Paris, where a staggering 50,000 have been sold — roughly a third of the total production — and where every bike bay seems to contain several of the things. Conquering the French capital under Peugeot's noses must have been satisfying but Piaggio hasn't slowed up, having revamped its flagship three-wheeler to create the MP3 500 ABS-ASR.

The most obvious difference is the doubly long name, whose extra initials denote the addition of anti-lock brakes and a traction control system that Piaggio calls Acceleration Slip Regulation. But this is a major redesign,



PIAGGIO MP3 500 ABS-ASR





with more than 80% of parts new. The unmistakable two-front-wheeled look remains but bodywork is reshaped, and the wider screen is three-way adjustable for height.

Power comes from a 493cc, liquid-cooled single, as before, but the sohc unit is updated with new valvegear, and revised intake, exhaust and CVT transmission systems, plus ride-by-wire throttle control. Piaggio says the new unit is smoother, quieter and more fuel-efficient, although the maximum output of 40bhp at 7250rpm hasn't changed since a twin-spark, four-valve lump powered Gilera's Fuoco three-wheeler back in 2007.

The chassis is also comprehensively updated, with a new tubular steel frame, claimed to be 35% stiffer, holding a longer, wider dual-seat that gives a roomier riding position, with slightly longer reach to the bars. Both rider and pillion get a small back support; the latter also has solid aluminium grab-handles. Front wheel diameter is up from 12 to 13 inches, and the linked, freshly ABS-equipped brake system's front discs are also bigger at 258mm.

For such a distinctive looking scooter the MP3 is reassuringly normal to ride, especially in a straight line, where its single-pot motor gives very adequate performance with a complete lack of fuss, albeit without too many thrills either. The ride-by-wire system's throttle response was very good, and the MP3 had more than enough acceleration to leave the aggressive traffic well behind. (Provided it wasn't in Eco mode, which cuts power and was very dull.)

The Piaggio also worked fine on some faster roads in the outskirts, where it rumbled along smoothly and very happily at over 100km/h with a bit more to come, its easily adjustable screen doing a useful in not outstanding job of deflecting the wind. Straight-line stability was fine too but it was in bends that the MP3 played its trump card, even if fine weather meant it couldn't demonstrate the extra wheel's remarkable grip advantage in the wet.

An MP3's steering feels subtly different to that of a normal scooter but I didn't find it remotely disconcerting; Piaggio's system is more refined than the newer set-up of Peugeot's rival Metropolis. Handling was very neutral and confidence inspiring, helped by capable suspension, and by the larger wheels' smoother response over bumps.

The only time the MP3 felt strange was occasionally on slowing to a walking pace, when I pressed the button on the bars to set the tilt lock, then tried to continue steering it like a bike — which understandably it declined to do, momentarily handling more like a wheelbarrow. Riding through the French capital using the tilt lock to avoid putting my feet down added to the entertainment, though, especially every time I accelerated away and the MP3 miraculously felt like a bike again.







scooter test

For me the three-wheeler has a big safety advantage when cornering on slippery streets, Parisian cobbles and manhole covers included (although the Michelin City tyres worked well). The traction control and ABS can only help. The brakes were very good, too; more powerful than those of most big scooters. I generally used left and right hand levers although the linked system also has a foot pedal.

Piaggio hasn't forgotten practicality with this update either. Along with the ergonomic updates the seat, which unlocks at the press of a button, hinges very easily to reveal more storage space; enough for two full-face lids. As before there's a light and electrical socket, and now there's also a USB charger in the fairing's glove compartment.

The accessory Piaggio Multimedia Platform allows smart-phone connection to the neat new dashboard's digital functions, including fuel consumption, route maps and tyre pressures. It's all clever stuff, and the MP3's bonus is that its benefits come without significant drawbacks (and also with the advantage in some markets that, as it's technically a three-wheeler, it can be ridden by car drivers with no need for a bike licence).











Okay, so the extra wheel adds some weight, complexity and cost. At 263kg dry this model is slightly heavier than its predecessor, partly due to the ABS, but it isn't especially heavy for a maxi-scooter. It's no wider than other maxi-scooters and no more complex than many bikes. Its price, while hardly cheap, means it's considerably less expensive than the likes of Suzuki's Burgman 650 or Yamaha's TMax, let alone the BMW C-scooters. (In some countries there are two models: this Sport version and a Business model with different paintwork and other cosmetic details.)

Although the MP3's main theoretical advantage over a conventional scooter is safety, especially for inexperienced riders, it's also arguably more fun to ride. Admittedly it doesn't steer with the



PIAGGIO MP3 500 ABS-ASR









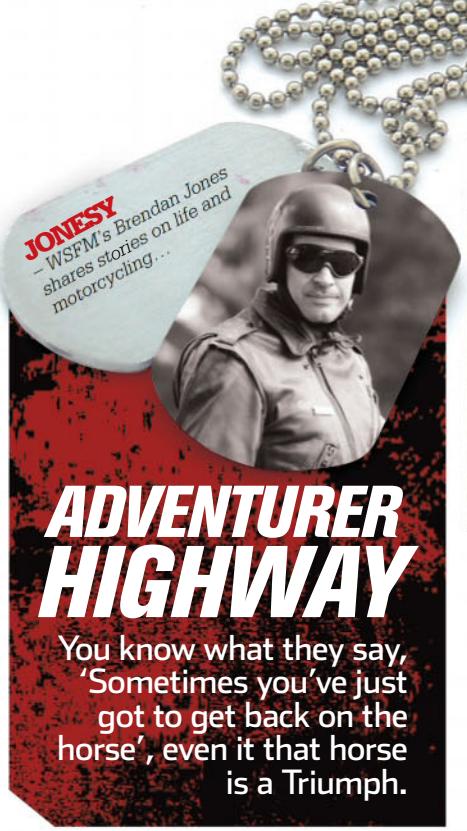
lightness or precision of the best two-wheeled scooters. (Let's face it, if you want sweet handling you shouldn't ride a bike with its engine bolted to the swing-arm.) But for experienced riders the Piaggio provides compensation in the liberties you can take when cornering on a wet road, when it's enjoyable while a normal scooter would just be worrying.

So the flagship MP3 500 is safe (relatively), fun, practical and reasonably priced. For me it certainly does all the normal scootery things well enough to leave its exceptional stability as a convincing argument in its favour. The Parisians have got it right on this one, and the conclusion is the same whether you say it in French, Italian or any other language: "Vive la révolution!" ■

PIAGGIO MP3 ABS-ASR

PETROL ENGINE TYPE
Liquid-cooled single
VALVE ARRANGEMENT
SOHC, 4 valves
DISPLACEMENT
493cc
BORE X STROKE
94 x 71mm
CARBURATION
Electronic fuel-injection
TRANSMISSION
CVT automatic
MAXIMUM POWER
40bhp @ 7250 rpm
MAXIMUM TORQUE
45Nm @ 5250 rpm
FRONT SUSPENSION
"Articulated quadrilateral", 85mm travel
REAR SUSPENSION
Twin shocks, 108mm wheel travel, adjustable spring preload
FRONT BRAKE
Twin 258mm discs with ABS, linked system
REAR BRAKE
Single 240mm disc with ABS, linked system
FRONT WHEEL
3.00 x 13in, cast aluminium
REAR WHEEL
4.50 x 14in, cast aluminium
FRONT TYRE
110/70 x 13in Michelin City
REAR TYRE
140/70 x 14in Michelin City
RAKE/TRAIL
24.5 degrees/103mm [25.1 degrees/108mm]
WHEELBASE
1500mm
SEAT HEIGHT
790mm
FUEL CAPACITY
12 litres
WEIGHT
263kg dry





JONESY – WSFM's Brendan Jones shares stories on life and motorcycling...

ADVENTURER HIGHWAY

You know what they say, 'Sometimes you've just got to get back on the horse', even it that horse is a Triumph.



The last time I rode a Triumph it didn't end well. It broke my back and I broke its. In defense of all parties, a two and a half inch deep pile of loose road base over possibly one of the worst sections of road, (if you've ridden Captain Thunderbolts Way in NSW, you'll know what I'm talking about) that even a WR would've had trouble not high-siding on this particular off-camber corner. So I was under the impression that maybe I had burnt a bridge with the Triumph people, but no, here they are again offering me another one of their bikes.

This time though, it's being filmed for the car show that I pop up on from time to time on channel 10 called RPM, although I like to call it our bike show by stealth, just don't tell anyone. The boss of the show rang me and said that we were going on an adventure bike ride and did I have any adventure bike experience? I said "Yes, I had!" I didn't elaborate that the extent of my adventure bike experience was watching the "Long Way Round" one weekend, but I watched the whole thing and there's at least 6 DVDs. I wouldn't be going alone either which was good to hear, and as entertaining as Charlie Boorman and Ewan McGregor are - all they seemed to do was go through sand and eat sheep's testicles - I had an inkling that we were heading for the Upper Hunter. And although there are plenty of sheep in that neck of the woods, there isn't much sand.

My companions to start with would be a couple of Mr Motocross legends including Stephen Gall who used to crank his Yamaha around the track to win a whole bunch of trophies for the series, these days you might've seen the latest Mad Max movie, the bit where Max rides an R1 with paddle tyres on the sand, that's him. And alongside him was Anthony Gunter or 'Grunt', who went on to win three Mr Motocross titles! I'll always remember him in the promotional poster for the PE175, which depicted him in a suit spattered with mud standing next to a clean bike. And the last rider joining me wasn't a Mr anything, she was a Miss, or Ms by the name of Kate Peck. Kate is a supermodel and an adventure bike rider taboot. I hadn't met our Mr Motocrosses before, but I had met Kate at various functions where I'd seen her wearing pretty much a napkin. So whilst I knew I had no chance of keeping up with the lads on the dirt, I'm sure I was going to be able to keep up with Kate, or so I thought…

We got off the ferry at Wisemans, hit the dirt and all three of them including the producer/camera guy were gone. If I was doing 70 on the forest track, they were doing almost twice that! I hit an off-camber corner and for a moment was sure I wasn't even going to beat the one year anniversary of my last crash, the traction control and ABS combo on the Tiger saved my arse. Five minutes later I pull up and the gang's there waiting, all of them I note, aren't wearing helmets and clearly had been parked for some time. Before I can even contemplate taking off my helmet we're moving again, because we have 380 more kays of dirt to cover.

Along the way I pick up tips from Stephen, as when he's not riding bikes in a post-apocalyptic world, teaches advanced riding skills. He tells me that I have to "unlearn everything I have learned about riding". Considering I've been doing that for the last 27 years, 98% of it on the road, it's going to be a lot harder than it sounds. These bikes are totally different to my DRZ 400, for a start the Triumph would be 100 kilos heavier, so following Gally's advice, it's up on the pegs and counter steering with my feet. It's surprising how much different it feels, and for the next 100km I'm keeping up with the group. Well I'm two minutes behind not five, but they still have their helmets off each time I re-join them.

And I'm impressed not just with Gally and Grunt, but Kate Peck is an enigma and I'm ashamed I presumed that because she's a girl and a model, she wouldn't be very good. She was on a Beemer 800 and to watch her handle it over the rough stuff was more than impressive. I soon learn that she has joined Charlie Boorman here in Australia for some adventure rides in the past as well as spending three months adventure riding in Columbia.

By day two I'm getting the hang of it, although just when I think how well I'm going, I veer off the road and end up going into a paddock. Thanks again to the off-road mode on the Tiger, and that there were no trees in the vicinity, I managed to keep it upright. I looked around to see Grunt giving me the thumbs up as he went streaking past, I also noted that when I did catch up to the gang, they hadn't had time to take their helmets off, so clearly I was getting better.

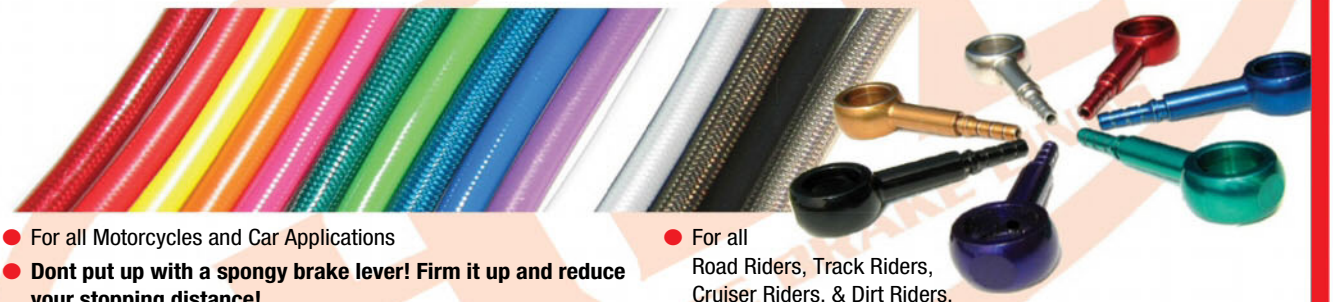
Sure I'm not Dakar ready, but at least this time the Triumph went back to the dealers and not the assessors, and I went home to a radox bath and not a hospital bed! ■



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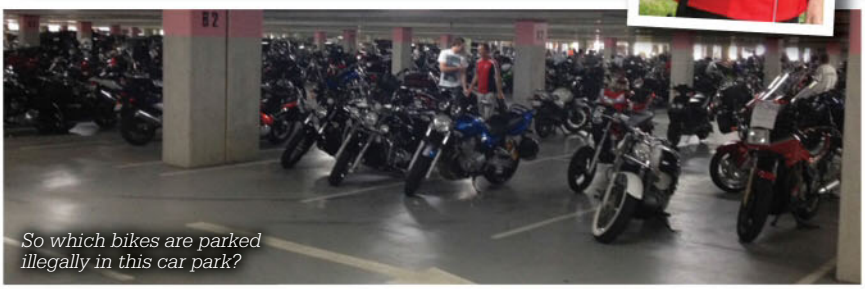
CHAIN MAIL

LETTERS Your thoughts on life, the universe and motorcycling.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Thanks to Scooteria, we've got a great woman's GoGo Gear leather jacket to giveaway each issue for the letter of the month. Scooteria is the only stockist to sell GoGo Gear leather jackets for women and have a wide range available at www.scooteria.com.au





So which bikes are parked illegally in this car park?

GOOD SERVICE TWO WHEELS

I have always believed good service should be acknowledged, which is why I've decided to write this letter to the magazine. I own a Ducati Monster 659 and his name is Fabio. Recently I had an issue with his engine and unfortunately he was out of warranty.
With that said, I would like to thank Eduardo at Ducati head office for letting the work go ahead with no cost. I'd also like to express my appreciation to the crew at Mornington Ducati for carrying out the work and helping me any way they could. The service there is amazing which is why I tell any motorcyclist to take the time out to go and see them. We have bought all our apparel and helmets from them and their knowledge is always exceptional, probably the reason why we now travel two hours to get our services done there. Trust me, go down and say g'day to Jhon, Marty, Guy and Andrew, and I'm sure they can help you with anything you might need.

Kim and Fabio

(It's great to hear stories regarding good service and credible professionals. It's also good to see people like yourself taking the time to pass on your gratitude. – TW)

WINNER!

SO TRUE

Jonesy - I just read your 'column' in the 5/15 issue and enjoyed the last sentence immensely. I would have laughed in his face if I was in your boots. I hope you 'gave him the mail'. Anyway, thanks again for putting a smile on my face and keep up the good work.

Alan Squires

(Thanks Alan. It just goes to show that you can't put brains in monuments. -Jonesy)

MORE PAGES!

Hi Miles - I have been a reader of TWO wheels (not 2 Wheels) since the seventies and had over 20 bikes in this time. One thing that really annoys me is when you use a black background and print in white, it must be my age but it appears to be much harder to read. Also an increase of the size back to what it was would be good or I may have to reconsider my subscription renewal as the value for money has decreased substantially. Less for more is not a good policy!

Ian Forsyth, Noranda, WA

(I totally agree with you Ian, which is why not only you'll notice in this issue a change in design, but the magazine will also return to 100 pages in the October issue. – MR)

BE AWARE

The Editor – I'm writing to you to inform the readers of a 'new' ruling that many riders might not be aware of…I certainly wasn't! When I visited the flea markets in Maroochydore lately, I couldn't find a spot in the motorcycle parking area so parked out in the car park instead. Although when I was planning to leave, a fellow motorcyclist informed me that my bike was actually illegally parked as it was the only bike in the parking space. Apparently if there are two bikes, it's legal. Of course this increases the chance of your bike being damaged by wayward car doors. Furthermore, if you park in front of a couple of bikes, you are then deemed to be parked outside of the designated area, also grounds for a parking ticket.

I know it all sounds ridiculous, and that's because it is! I just thought I'd make people aware that the next time you're cruising through the Sunshine State, watch out, because the boys in blue are out to get you…

Wayne Millar, Yandina QLD

(Some of the laws they come up with are truly amazing, and this is just another example of raising revenue in any way they can! – TW)

SCOOTER JOY

I just wanted to say how excited I was to pick up the latest issue of Two Wheels and see a feature on a scooter. I used to subscribe to Scooter magazine many years ago when it was still available, and it was one of my favourite magazines. Obviously it was a little disappointing when it stopped being published, but to see it once again with its own section in the magazine was very refreshing. There aren't many magazines that feature scooters, yet they still continue to rise in popularity. I've owned a Vespa for just on three years now and couldn't see myself riding anything else. Once again, well done and keep up the good work, especially on scooters!

Amanda, Lane Cove

SOMETHING TO SAY?

Chain Mail, Two Wheels, 2 Stanley Street, Silverwater, NSW 2128 or email info@twowheels.com.au Letters may be edited by the editor and will be discarded without a full return address.

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